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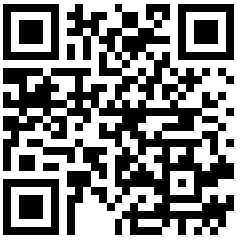

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 470. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 1ST, 1898. ONE PENNY.

NURSES OF GREAT BRITAIN AND DR TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa

Merit, and Merit alone, has made the Food Beverage, Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, a Proved Success, and the remarkable unsolicited evidence from Nurses in all parts of the country, here with published, supports our statement that its merits have been recognised to an extent hitherto unknown in the history of any preparation. One thing is certain. Nothing has ever been discovered that can approach it in giving lightness of heart, joy of life, fleetness of foot, and that general feeling of comfort which only comes from a full capacity to enjoy every pleasure, moral, intellectual, and physical.

MEDICAL TESTIMONY.

The LANCET says: "Vi-Cocoa must be assigned a place in the front rank of really valuable foods, since it is the embodiment of the numerous principles contained in malt, hops, kola, and cocoa. . . . Of distinct value as a restorative and stimulating food."

The BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL says: "Vi-Cocoa is a very palatable beverage of great stimulating and sustaining properties."

The most remarkable Testimony ever published: NURSES AND DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA.

A Real Pick-Me-Up.
Nurse F. GEORGE, Devonport, Hill, Congleton: "I have tried Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and think it is a real 'pick-me-up,' and intend to use no other."

Gives Great Satisfaction.
Nurse WILKINSON, 30, Russell Street, Clitheroe: "Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa gives every satisfaction, and I shall not fail to recommend it to my friends and patients."

Both Meat and Drink.
Nurse WEAVER, The Parsonage, Rickmansworth, Herts: "My brother has tried Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and thinks it is both meat and drink."

Great Benefit to Invalids.
Nurse VILLAGE, Linton, near Maidstone: "I have proved Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa to be of great benefit to Invalids, as it is so easily digested."

The Best ever Tasted.
Nurse E. BOWDEN, 8, Evershot Road, Tollington Park, N.: "I consider Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa the very best cocoa that I have tasted. I find it more refreshing and more invigorating than any other. I have been giving it to my patients, and shall certainly recommend it to both my patients and personal friends."

For Excellence.
Nurse GILKES, 11, St. Paul's Square, Southsea: "I think Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa is excellent, and very good for those who suffer from indigestion. This I know practically."

No Praise Too High.
Nurse SAFFREY, The Cottage, Haddesden Road, Belvedere, Kent: "I am pleased to say I think more of the merits of Dr. Tibbles' than even the praise already bestowed upon it."

For Physical and Mental Suffering.
Nurse CLARE "The Laurels," Langley: "I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the value of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, as I find it most beneficial to persons suffering physically and mentally. It is most nutritive and extremely pleasant to take, and I shall strongly recommend it to my patients."

Nourishing and Stimulating.
Nurse HARRINGTON, Coxhoe, Durham: "Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa possesses good nourishing and stimulating qualities. I shall certainly recommend it to my patients and friends."

Invaluable for Night Duty.
Nurse WILCOX, Bradford Street, Birmingham: "I always take a cup of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa when on night duty."

Highly Pleased with It.
Nurse ROBERTS, Ryecroft Villa, 20, St. James's Street, Southport: "We are highly pleased with Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa. I think it possesses good nourishing and stimulating qualities. I shall recommend it to all my patients and friends."

Refreshing, Stimulating, Pleasant.
Nurse SUNDERLAND, Shewview Villa, Cheam Road, Sutton, Surrey: "I have tried Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and find it a refreshing, stimulating, and pleasant beverage. I shall have pleasure in recommending it to my friends and relations."

Finds it Excellent.
Nurse SCHOFIELD, Rathgar, Dublin: "I have tested Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa and find it excellent, and will recommend to my patients and friends."

For Sick Room and Breakfast Table.
Nurse B. BEASLEY, 31, Blenheim Gardens Reading: "I wish to say that I have found Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa of great value both in the sick room and on the breakfast table. I use it myself, and can honestly say that it is the most genuine and superior cocoa that can be obtained. I always advise my patients to try it, and when they do they find that it is better and suits their digestion better than any cocoa they have ever tried. I shall always have great pleasure in recommending Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, as I am sure it has no equal."

Likes It Very Much.
Nurse SESSIONS, Cotteswold House, Cirencester: "I have tested Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and like it very much. I shall have pleasure in recommending it to all my patients and friends."

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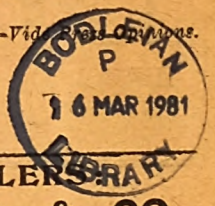

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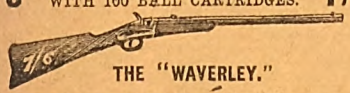

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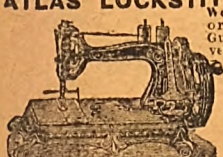

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Short Stories

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 470.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 1st, 1898.

A Triple Crime.

The *Theatre de la Folie* in Brussels was crowded with a brilliant audience in honour of the reigning favourite, Léontia, a dancer of bewitching grace and beauty. The Duc de Simeuse was said to have discovered her and she had quickly become the rage.

"Who's the tall man with Colonel du Berry?" asked a lady in the stalls.

Her husband looked at the stage-box and saw the two men in question. The colonel was a well-known figure in fashionable circles, but the other, a man of striking appearance and distinguished bearing, was a stranger.

"Oh, that's the Comte de Fervacques, I expect. They say he's a millionaire and a widower to boot. He's just come from Paris, and will be quite an acquisition."

Facing the box occupied by the colonel and his friend was one containing two ladies, the younger of whom soon attracted the latter's attention. In answer to his inquiries he was told that they were the Duchesse de Simeuse and her daughter Thérèse, and at the sound of the name a curious expression passed over his face.

"Do you know them?" asked the Comte de Fervacques.

"Oh, yes. They are charming. I am going to a large ball there on the twenty-fifth."

"Could you get me an invitation?" asked the other after a pause.

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His friend laughed. "I've no doubt I could, but, *mon ami*, you are just too late in the field, for the lovely Thérèse is engaged to the young Baron Vanlinden."

"That will not make their society any the less charming to me."

Thérèse de Simeuse was considered cold and proud. Her beauty was of the essentially aristocratic type, with regular features, delicate nostrils, and small, shapely ears. Her eyes were perfect in form and colour, but their usual expression was unemotional, and the haughty poise of her small head showed her full appreciation of her exalted rank. But under this cold exterior beat a warm heart, and were hidden the generous impulses of a noble nature. The knowledge of her mother's sufferings at the hands of a weak, dissipated husband, had made her grave beyond her years, and had lifted the charmed veil that hides married life from most young French girls.

The night of the ball at the Hôtel Simeuse arrived. It was a most dazzling affair, and among all the representatives of rank and beauty, none were more observed than the lovely daughter of the house, and the reputed millionaire Henri, Comte de Fervacques.

"This is our dance, I think, Mademoiselle?" he said with a courtly bow.

She laid her hand upon his arm and they took several turns round the spacious room, then he led the way to the balcony where all sorts of luxurious lounges had been arranged in a perfect bower of roses and heliotrope.

"I cannot get rid of the idea that we have met before, Mademoiselle," he said, looking fixedly at her.

"Not that I am aware of, Monsieur le Comte, both your name and features are perfectly strange to me."

"It is not to be expected that Mademoiselle would remember *me*, but no one could ever see *her* face and forget it," he rejoined, lowering his voice to an almost caressing tone.

She flushed angrily and her eyes fell before his expressive glance, then proudly raising her head she said coldly:

"I am neglecting my duties as daughter of the house. Kindly take me back to the Duchess."

He obeyed with a smile that was not good to see, and a little later when he saw her with her *fiancé*, smiling, radiant and gracious, he turned on his heel with the unspoken resolve: "She shall recognise me yet!"

Baron Wilhelm Vanlinden was a young man of large fortune, irreproachable character and distinctly prepossessing appearance. The engagement between him and Mademoiselle de Simeuse had been long desired by the two families, and happily had proved most acceptable to the young people themselves. He had adored Thérèse from his boyhood and she now returned his affection with an ardour that few would have given her credit for.

The Comte de Fervacques soon established himself on terms of intimacy at the Hôtel Simeuse. His unlimited wealth made him a most useful friend to the extravagant old Duke, and his charming manners and graceful attentions rapidly ingratiated him with the long suffering Duchess. Thérèse alone seemed to shrink from him, and repulsed all his friendly overtures with chilling civility. She listened unmoved to all his thrilling recitals of adventure in the wilds of America or the snow-clad Steppes of Russia, and all the resources of his fertile brain had as yet been taxed in vain to awaken the slightest warmth in her manner to him. In fact the only two beings for whom she evinced any feeling were her mother and her *fiancé*.

One Monday morning about ten o'clock Henri de Fervacques received a visit from a lean, sallow-faced Irish-American, who was nominally his secretary.

"Have you found out anything?" said the Count in English as soon as the man had locked the door behind him.

"Yes, my lord," was the prompt reply. "Baron Vanlinden is a member of a secret political society, the rules of which are most strict, and they are bound by a solemn oath not to reveal their movements even to save life itself. There is to be a meeting at Mechlin on Friday evening to which Vanlinden and his friend Van Scheen are going disguised as pedlars. The password is *Pro Patria* and each member wears a little iron cross like this."

"Malone, you're a treasure," said de Fervacques taking the badge from his hand. "How did you find all this out so soon?"

"That's my secret, sir. Gentlemen's valets are often rather talkative, and besides, I've not been a member of three secret societies myself for nothing."

"Have you the names of the president and chief members?" Malone handed him a rather dirty piece of paper on which was written the needful information. The Count took it with an approving nod, and after giving Malone a handsome sum of money, dismissed him, and prepared to act upon the knowledge he had acquired.

The next evening Baron Vanlinden and his friend Van Scheen were dining together when a letter was handed to the former. He opened it, read it with evident surprise and then passed it to his companion.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, it's only a precaution. The chief has heard something that makes him extra careful. That's all," said Van Scheen.

The note was as follows:

Leave Brussels on Thursday night instead of Friday. Go to the Hôtel du Lion, five miles this side of Mechlin, and stay there until you hear again from me. The landlord is to be trusted.

This was duly signed and sealed with the mystic token of their order, so there was nothing to do but to obey. Vanlinden felt a strange misgiving, but his friend had no scruples, and as they expected that the next meeting would be fraught with important issues there was the more need for caution and obedience.

On Tuesday it was announced that the Comte de Fervacques had left for Paris by the night train; but his valet could have told a different tale. De Fervacques left the train alone two or three stations from Brussels and made his way in a hired carriage to the Hôtel du Lion, an unfrequented wayside inn, kept by a man of bad reputation, on the outskirts of a straggling villiage near Mechlin.

Vanlinden and his friend started as directed on the Thursday night, disguised as pedlars and each wearing the badge of the order inside his vest. They walked part of the way and arrived at their destination both tired and hungry. The landlord of the Hôtel du Lion gave them the pass-word and took them up to their room, which was as dreary as such rooms generally are. There was a large fire which, while looking cheerful, brought out the damp, fusty smell of an unused apartment with imperfect ventilation, and caused the moisture to stand out on the discoloured walls. The supper was laid and the food was well cooked, so they settled down to make the best of their compulsory quarters. The wine was quite above the average, and to counteract the depressing effect of their surroundings they drank pretty freely

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of it, and both fell asleep over the fire soon after supper.

At the same hour an aged priest was saying his nightly office in his oratory not many hundred yards away, when the window of the adjoining room was forced open, and a man dressed as a pedlar, wearing a mask and a curious iron cross on his breast, entered stealthily, and falling upon the kneeling figure, stabbed him in the back. His cries brought his faithful housekeeper to his aid, and she came face to face with the murderer, who, while giving her full time to observe him, flung her upon the ground, and inflicted two or three slight flesh wounds in her arm and shoulder. She fainted from fright, and the assassin departed hurriedly by the way he came in. He at once made his way to the Hôtel du Lion, was admitted by the landlord, and then crept softly up to the room where the two friends were still sleeping after the drugged wine. He drew Vanlinden's handkerchief from his pocket, wrapped the blood-stained knife in it, and placed it carefully on the person of the man he meant to ruin.

A few minutes later Henri, Comte de Fervacques, left the Hôtel du Lion, and made his way to Paris as fast as the night express could carry him.

The next day, Brussels was scandalised by news of the most startling nature. An aged priest had been brutally murdered while at his devotions, by a man dressed as a pedlar, who had been arrested at the Hôtel du Lion, with a blood-stained weapon in his pocket, and had been identified by the priest's servant, owing to a curious iron cross he wore. The supposed pedlar turned out to be no less a person than Baron Wilhelm Vanlinden, who refused to give any explanation of his presence in that neighbourhood on the night of the outrage.

Thérèse de Simeuse was at first stunned by the terrible intelligence, then she set her wits to work and obtained permission to visit her lover in the prison.

"How good of you to come, dearest!" said Vanlinden. "It shows me that you do not believe this awful accusation, though I fear things look very black against me!"

"How could I think such a thing for a moment, Wilhelm," she said fondly. "There is some horrible mistake, but it will be quite easy to prove your innocence, of course!"

"I'm not so sure about that, my dear one," he said sadly.

"Why not? What *do* you mean?" she asked with sudden alarm.

"Simply this. I am not at liberty to explain either my presence at the Hôtel du Lion or my reason for wearing this disguise."

"But you will be able to at the trial?" she persisted, as she knelt at his side and looked up piteously into his pale, strained face. "Think of what is at stake, dear, our life's happiness, your own honour and that of your family."

"Dearest, my honour is just that which demands that I should not break an oath even to save my life, and," he pursued more tenderly, "you would not have me secure our happiness by breaking my word, I am sure. I know you to well for that."

She did not answer for a moment, and the sound of her low sobs alone broke the silence of the prison-cell. At last she raised her head and said with resolute look, though her voice was still weak:

"No, *mon bien-aimé*. You could not do that. We must find some other way of saving you."

The trial was drawing near before the Comte de Fervacques returned from Paris. He had heard the terrible news, and was loud in his denunciations of the iniquity of the charge, and eloquent in his expressions of sympathy for Mademoiselle de Simeuse and her parents. He had several interviews with Vanlinden and did his utmost to persuade him to explain his movements on the night of the murder, but in vain, the young man's fortitude was impregnable, alike to the pleadings of his own heart for love and life, and to the terrors of death held over him by his counsel and friends.

"It is no use waiting for him," said De Fervacques to himself as he left the prison one day, "if he would have spoken he would have been imprisoned, if not hanged for treason, and then the marriage could never have taken place, but as he won't, it must be done the other way!" With that he went and asked for a private interview with Mademoiselle de Simeuse on a matter of vital importance.

Thérèse de Simeuse received him with her usual *hauteur*, and coldly requested to know the reason of his strange request.

"Mademoiselle, I have just come from Baron Vanlinden. He persists in this obstinate silence which, I fear, will cost him his life. Can you do nothing to induce him to clear himself?"

"Impossible, Monsieur le Comte, I could not ask the baron to act in opposition to his own judgment and sense of duty. His innocence *must* be established," she continued passionately. "There was no motive for the crime. His blameless life must tell in his favour! It can't be that the law is so blind. My father has engaged the most eminent counsel to plead his cause."

"And all that will be of no use unless he can explain his mysterious presence in that neighbourhood, or else can produce the real murderer," said De Fervacques in a tone of calm conviction.

"You are hard and cruel," she murmured.

"No, my dear mademoiselle, far from it. I am deeply grieved for your sake, if for nothing else, and I am convinced of Vanlinden's innocence;" and he added in a low tone, "*I can prove it!*"

"You? You can prove it?" she exclaimed breathlessly, starting to her feet, and coming towards him with out-stretched hands. "And you will do so? You will not let him die?"

"No, I will not let him die," he began slowly.

"Ah, may God bless you for those words, and forgive me for the ill-will I have borne you!" she interrupted, as the tears of joy forced their way into her kindling eyes.

"Yes, I will do it," he said gently, taking both her hands in his, "on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That you become my wife the day of his release, and swear never to reveal my part in the transaction."

"Never!" she cried, striving to free herself from him. "Never! my heart has not deceived me, you are base and treacherous! No, a thousand times no!"

"Then you will let him die a felon's death, rather than marry one who loves you, as his cold nature could never love. One whom no oath, however sacred, would keep silence if *you* were the prize of speech!" he pursued passionately, still holding her in his firm grasp. "Don't shrink from me, Thérèse, I love you with the passion of my life; I don't ask you to love me yet, but only to give yourself to me in return for his life."

The vehemence of his words and the singular magnetism of his presence, the helplessness of her position, and above all the fear for her lover, made her

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brain reel, and she would have fallen if he had not put his arm round her at that moment. The act restored her failing faculties; with a shudder she withdrew from his embrace, and, darting to the other side of the room, cowered on the sofa like a creature at bay. De Fervacques said no more, but kept his eyes fixed on her with an expression that at once repelled and dominated her.

"At least you will give me time to consider?" she faltered.

"You may have till to-morrow night, but if you betray me, remember, Vanlinden dies!"

He left her with a courtly bow, and entered his carriage with a triumphant smile, for he knew the game was won.

The next morning Thérèse rose pale and exhausted after a sleepless night of agonised perplexity, and, accompanied by her maid, went to see the solicitor in charge of Vanlinden's case.

"My client is in a most serious position, Mademoiselle. I cannot ignore the gravity of the case. If he persists in this course of obdurate silence it will be impossible to save his life, unless, of course, the real murderer can be found," he replied in answer to her anxious inquiries.

"Then you think that is the only chance?"

"The only one, Mademoiselle."

She left the office with a stunned, dazed feeling as if part of her were dead already, and every time she closed her aching eyes, the vision of her lover, dead at the hands of the executioner, rose before them, and his voice seemed to sound in her ears: "*You* might have saved me, if you would."

That night the Comte de Fervacques received a scented, coroneted note which ran as follows:

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE FERVACQUES.

"I accept your terms and pledge myself to marry you in return for Baron Vanlinden's release, providing that you will allow a month to elapse between his acquittal and the day you claim me as your wife. My feelings to you remain unaltered and unalterable, but a de Simeuse never broke her word.

"THÉRÈSE DE SIMEUSE."

"I don't like the delay," he said musingly after he had read it, "but I suppose I can trust her, and it's better not to drive her too far or she might baulk my plans by making a tragic exit from this world's stage. I must now procure the proofs of the young man's innocence," he concluded with a curl of his mobile lips.

He took a slip of closely written paper from a drawer in his writing table, and a small bottle from a curious silver casket that stood on a richly carved cabinet, and took them both to his dressing-room. There he effected a complete change in his appearance, and presently sallied forth under cover of the dusk, looking like a dirty, shabby artizan, towards the slums of the city. Here he sought out a man who had served his ends in the past, but whose craving for absinthe had kept him from turning to any good account the hush-money he had received for his dirty work, and was now on his last legs both physically and financially.

A very short interview sufficed to persuade the besotted outcast to copy the confession of murder that De Fervacques placed before him, under a promise of a hundred pounds and means of escape before the police should be put on his track. As he wrote the last words with his shaky, almost illegible scrawl, the man behind him pressed a handkerchief steeped in chloroform over his mouth and nose, and when that had done its deadly work, he drew a piece of rope from his pocket and strung the unconscious form up to a hook in the ceiling and left the house posting the important document on his way home.

The cunningly contrived plot worked without a hitch. In consequence of "information received," Baron Vanlinden was acquitted by the authorities with many apologies on the following day. No inquiry was instituted as the supposed suicide of the self-convicted murderer. A life like his was of no account in a great city, and it must be confessed he left none to regret him.

The Duc de Simeuse, acting upon cleverly insinuated calumnies veiled with expressions of deep regret, from the Comte de Fervacques, at once announced his determination of breaking off the engagement between Baron Vanlinden and his daughter unless the mysterious conduct of the former could be satisfactorily explained to him. This was, of course, impossible, and the poor young baron left Amsterdam, en route for New York within a week of his release without having been permitted to have an interview with his former *fiancée*.

On the appointed day a most magnificent ceremony celebrated the sacrifice of Thérèse de Simeuse on the altar of Henri de Fervacques' base passions.

A couple of months later he entered her exquisitely appointed boudoir, as she sat aimlessly toying with a jewelled fan.

"Madame la Comtesse," he began with a bow that had more mockery than courtesy in it, "you said you did not remember ever having seen me before we met at the Hôtel Simeuse: let me now refresh your memory. Fifteen years ago, when you were a child of six and I was a lad at school, I saved up my pocket money to buy you a bunch of roses and give them to you as usual on your walk. I asked you to kiss me, but you clenched your little hand and pushed me away saying that 'You did not kiss *street* boys!' I was then Pierre Démar, the son of a poor country doctor, but I swore to humble you before I died, and now that your life is indissolubly linked with mine, let me tell you that you are no countess, for, in the eyes of the law, I am but Pierre Démar still!"

"You have tricked and deceived me, I shall denounce you!" she almost screamed in her rage and mortification.

"And proclaim your own shame to the world, for you and your charming father have been living on my money for nearly a year past," he said with cutting emphasis and brutality.

"But my presence need not inconvenience you," he continued calmly, "for I am sick of the tame conventionalities of European life. I am going to start for the East to-night, and you can return to your parents, or send for Vanlinden, whichever you prefer. You are nothing to me now that you have served my purpose. I leave you to enjoy your *freedom*," he said with a sneer, "on the modest income that can be saved from the results of your father's dissipation, as I feel sure the pride of a *de Simeuse* would not allow you to take anything from the hands of *Pierre Démar*."

As suddenly as he had flashed his brilliant personality upon the fashionable world of Brussels, so unexpectedly did he vanish from the scene of his remarkable triumphs, to pursue his devious course under other skies, and possibly re-appear in some of his former haunts before the curses which followed his name had died away on the trembling lips that uttered them.

MARY FERMOR.

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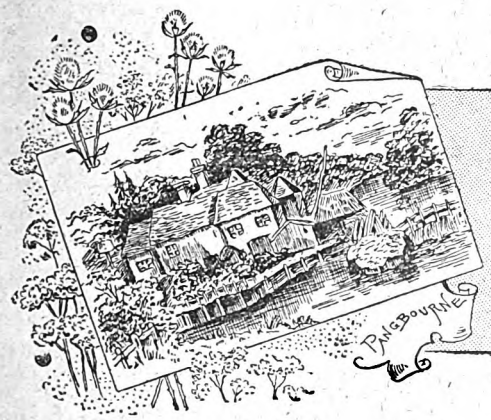

THE MUMMY'S FOOT.

FOR want of something better to do, I stepped into the shop of one of those dealers in curiosities, or dealers in *bric-à-brac*, as they are called in Parisian slang, so perfectly unintelligible to the rest of France.

No doubt you have peeped through the windows of some of these shops, since it has become the fashion to buy old furniture and the smallest stockbroker thinks he must have his room in the style of the Middle Ages.

It is somewhat like the shop of a dealer in old iron, an upholsterer's store, an alchemist's laboratory, and a painter's studio, all in one. In these mysterious dens, where a prudent twilight filters through the shutters, what is most notoriously ancient is the dust. The cobwebs there are more authentic than the guipures, and the old pear wood there is younger than the mahogany that arrived only yesterday from America.

My *bric-à-brac* dealer's shop was a real Capernaum. All the centuries and all the countries seemed to have made an appointment to meet there. A red Etruscan lamp stood upon a Boule cabinet with ebony panels severely set off by filaments of copper; a sofa of the time of Louis XV. carelessly stretched out its slender legs under a solid table of the reign of Louis XIII., with heavy convolutions of oak, with carved foliage and mythological monsters intermingled.

The ribboned cuirass of a suit of damasked Milan armour glittered in a corner; cupids and nymphs in biscuit, grotesque Chinese images, Dresden and old Sevres cups encumbered the stands and whatnots.

On the serrated shelves of dressing-tables beamed some immense Japanese dishes, in red and blue patterns heightened by hatchings of gold, side by side with some of Bernard Palissy's enamels, representing snakes, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From the overflowing cabinets escaped cascades of Chinese silk with its silvery sheen, waves of brocatel riddled with luminous specks by an oblique sunbeam; portraits of all ages smiled through their yellow varnish in more or less tarnished frames.

The proprietor was careful to follow me along the tortuous passage between the piles of furniture, restraining with his hands the dangerous sweep of my coat-tails, and watching over my elbows with the restless attention of the antiquary and the usurer.

A singular figure was that of the proprietor; his immense head, as smooth as a knee and fringed by a scanty aureola of white hair, which was set off more sharply by the light salmon colour of his skin, gave him a false air of patriarchal good-nature, corrected, however, by the glittering of his two little yellow eyes, that quivered in their orbits like two *louis-d'or* upon quicksilver. The curve of his nose had an aquiline outline that recalled the Jewish or Oriental type. His hands—lean, thin, veined, full of sinews sticking out like the strings of a violin, with nails that resemble the claws that terminate the membraneous wings of bats—moved with a sort of senile oscillation uncomfortable to look at; but these nervously twitching hands became as firm as steel pincers or lobster's claws, as soon as they took up any precious object—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a Bohemian crystal plate. This old fellow had such a profoundly rabbinical and cabalistic air that he would have been burnt three centuries ago for his looks.

"Won't you buy something of me to-day, sir? Here is a Malay creese with its blade undulating like a flame; look at these grooves for draining off the blood, these teeth pointing backward for tearing out the entrails when the dagger is drawn out; it is a ferocious weapon, a fine specimen, and it would show well in your collection; this two-handed sword is very handsome; it is one of Joseph de la Hera's, and what superb work there is on it!"

"No, I have enough arms and instruments of carnage; I should like a little figure, some sort of thing that would do me for a paperweight, for I can't endure all these manufactured bronzes that the stationers sell, and that are invariably found on every desk."

The old gnome, rummaging through his ancient lumber, spread out before me antique bronzes, or what he called such, bits of malachite, little Hindoo or Chinese idols, a kind of Oriental plaything of jade, the incarnation of Brahma or Vishnu, wonderfully suited for anything but this divine employment of holding newspapers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon quite constellated with warts, with its throat garnished with fangs and bristles, and a very abominable little Mexican fetish, representing the naked god Huitzilopotchli, when I chanced to notice a charming foot that I took at first for the fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful and tawn reddish hues which give to Florentine bronze its warm and lovely look, so preferable to the verdigris colour of the common bronzes that might well be taken for statues in a state of decomposition! a satiny gloss there was over its contours, polished by the loving kisses of twenty centuries; for it

must be a Corinthian brass, a work of the best period, perhaps a cast of Lysippus.

"This foot will just do for me," said I to the shopkeeper, who looked rather ironically and slyly at me, as he handed me the desired object so that I might examine it more at my ease.

I was surprised at it's lightness. It was not a metallic foot, but a foot of real flesh—an embalmed foot, a mummy's foot. By looking at it closely, the grain of the skin could be distinguished and the almost imperceptible figuring imprinted by the woof of the bandages. The toes were small and delicate, with nails as perfect, fine and transparent as agates. The great toe went off slightly from the others, in the antique fashion, and gave it an easy look—the lightness of a bird's foot. The sole, hardly streaked by a few invisible hatchings, showed that it had never touched the ground, and had only come in contact with the finest mats of Nile reeds and the softest of panther-skin rugs.

"Ha, ha! So you want the Princess Hermonthis' foot," said the shopkeeper, with a strange sneer, fixing his owlish eyes upon me; "ha, ha, ha! for a paperweight! An original idea, the idea of an artist. Anybody telling old Pharaoh that his beloved daughter's foot was to be used for a paperweight would certainly have astonished him, when he was having a mountain of granite dug up to put in it the triple coffin painted and gilded and all covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful pictures of the judgment of souls," added the queer little man, in a low tone, and as if talking to himself.

"How much will you sell me this fragment of a a mummy for?"

"Ah, as dear as I possibly can, for it is a splendid piece. If I had its mate, you wouldn't get it for less than five hundred francs. There is nothing more rare than the daughter of a Pharoah."

"Of course, it is not common; but how much do you want for it? First, I warn you, though that all the treasure I possess amounts to just five louis. I will buy anything that cost five louis, but nothing for more than that. If you should search all my pockets and my most secret drawers, you wouldn't find another single bit of money."

"Five louis for the Princess Hermonthis' foot is very little; very little indeed, for an authentic foot," said the dealer, tossing his head and rolling up his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you its wrapper into the bargain," he continued, winding it within an old scrap of damask; "very fine, real damask, Indian damask, that has never been dyed over; very strong and soft it is," mumured he, as he passed his fingers over the frayed fabric, a remnant of commercial habit that caused him to praise up an object that he himself thought only worth giving away.

He slipped the gold coins into a sort of mediæval alms-bag hanging at his belt, and repeated: "The Princess Hermonthis' foot to be used for a paperweight!" Then, fastening his phosphoric eyes on me, he said to me in a voice as strident as the miauling of a cat that has just swallowed a fish bone: "The old Pharaoh will not be pleased; the dear man loved his daughter."

"You speak of him as if you were his contemporary. Old as you are, you do not go quite back to the pyramids of Egypt," I answered him laughingly, from the threshold of his shop.

I went back well content with my acquisition. To avail myself of it at once, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a pile of papers—the rough draft of some verses—an undecipherable mosaic—erasures, articles begun; forgotten letters posted in the drawers, a mistake often happening to absent-minded people. The effect was charming, odd and romantic.

Quite satisfied with this adornment, I went out into the streets and walked about with the gravity and pride befitting a man who has the ineffable advantage over all the people he elbows, of possessing a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, Pharoah's daughter.

I considered everybody supremely ridiculous who did not own, like myself, a genuinely Egyptian paperweight, and it seemed to me a sensible man's true business should be to have a mummy's foot on his desk.

Fortunately, the meeting with a few friends made me think of something else besides my infatuation with my recent acquisition. I went off to dine with them, for it would have been difficult for me to dine by myself.

When I came home in the evening, my brains being somewhat stimulated, a gentle whiff of Oriental perfume delicately tickled my olfactory apparatus—the heat of the room had slightly warmed up the matron, the bitumen and the myrrh, in which the embalmers had bathed the princess's body. It was a faint perfume, though very penetrating, a perfume that four thousand years had been unable to evaporate.

The dream of Egypt was eternity. Its odours have the solidity of granite, and last as long.

Soon I was drinking full draughts from the black cup of sleep. For an hour or two everything remained opaque—oblivion and vacancy overwhelmed me with their dark waves.

However, my intellectual obscurity cleared up, and dreams began to touch me in their silent flight. The eyes of my soul were opened, and I saw my chamber just as it was in fact. I might have thought myself awake, but a vague feeling told me that I was sleeping, and that something strange was about to happen.

The odour of myrrh had increased in intensity, and I felt a slight headache, which I very reasonably attributed to a few glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future success.

I looked at my room with a feeling of expectation not in the least justifiable. The furniture was quite in its place, the lamp was lighted upon the table, subdued by the milky whiteness of its glass globe; the water-colours shone under their Bohemian glass, the curtain hung languidly, everything looked asleep and still.

But, after some moments, this quiet apartment seemed to be disturbed. The woodwork creaked furtively, the log buried under the ashes suddenly spurted a jet of bluish gas, and the discs of the oateras appeared like metallic eyes, intent, as I was, upon the things that were going to happen.

My eyes turned, by chance, towards the table where I had placed the Princess Hermonthis' foot. Instead of being motionless, as becomes an embalmed foot four thousand years old, it moved, quivered, and hopped over the papers like a frightened frog—one would have thought it in contact with voltaic pile. I heard very distinctly the hard rap made by its little heel, as hard as a gazelle's hoof.

I was rather displeased with my acquisition, prefering sedentary paperweights, and not considering it very natural for feet to walk about without legs, and I began to feel something that was much akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of one of my curtains move, and I heard a noise of somebody hopping on one foot. I must confess that I was hot and cold alternately; that I felt an unknown chill run down my back, and

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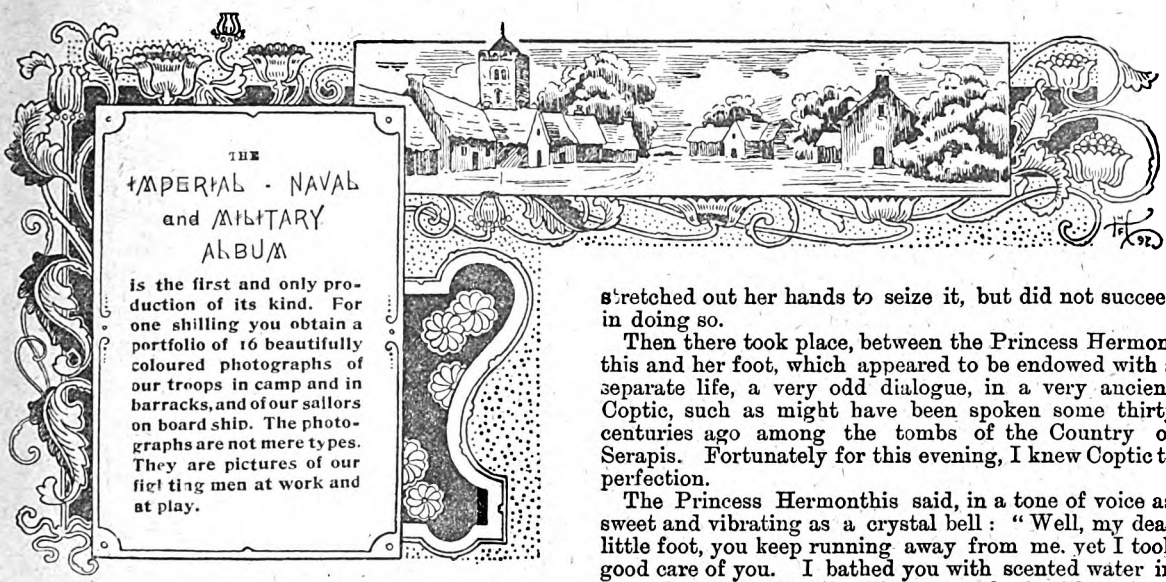

that my hair, standing on end, made my nightcap rise up in the air.

The curtains were half opened, and I saw coming towards me the strangest figure that can be imagined. It was a young girl, very dark *café-au-lait* coloured, like the bayadere Amani, of perfect beauty and of purest Egyptian type. She had almond-shaped eyes, with corners drawn up, and eyebrows so black they looked blue; her nose was of delicate cut, almost Greek in its fineness, and she might have been taken for a bronze statue of Corinth, if the prominence of her cheekbones and the slightly African expansion of her mouth had not indicated, beyond all doubt, the hierogliphic race of the banks of the Nile.

Her slender and spindle-turned arms, like those of very young girls, were circled with some sort of metallic and glass rings. Her hair was all in plaits, and upon her breast hung an idol in green clay, whose whip with its seven lashes indicated Isis, the conductor of souls. A gold plate glittered on her forehead, and some tracery of paint peeped through her coppery cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very strange. Imagine a dress of wrappings, covered with black and red heiroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unswaddled mummy.

By one of those leaps in thought so frequent in dreams, I heard the crackled and hoarse voice of the *bric-à-brac* dealer, who was repeating like a monotonous refrain the sentence he had pronounced in his shop with so enigmatic an intonation: "The old Pharoah will not be pleased; the dear man loved his daughter."

There was one strange circumstance that did not much reassure me: the apparition had only one foot; the other leg was broken off at the ankle. She directed her course towards the table, where the mummy's foot was moving and jumping about with increased activity. Reaching there, she leant upon the edge, and I saw a tear come into her eyes.

Although she did not speak, I clearly discerned her meaning. She looked at her foot—for it was certainly hers—with an expression of coquettish sadness infinitely graceful; but the foot leapt and ran to and fro, as if impelled by springs of steel. Two or three times she stretched out her hands to seize it, but did not succeed in doing so.

Then there took place, between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot, which appeared to be endowed with a separate life, a very odd dialogue, in a very ancient Coptic, such as might have been spoken some thirty centuries ago among the tombs of the Country of Serapis. Fortunately for this evening, I knew Coptic to perfection.

The Princess Hermonthis said, in a tone of voice as sweet and vibrating as a crystal bell: "Well, my dear little foot, you keep running away from me. yet I took good care of you. I bathed you with scented water in an alabaster basin; I rubbed your heel with pumice stone dipped in palm-oil; your nails were cut with gold pincers and polished with hippopotamus' tooth. I was careful to choose for you painted and embroidered shoes with the points turned up, which made you the envy of all the young girls of Egypt. You had on your great toe rings representing the sacred scarabaeus; and you carried the lightest body a lazy foot could wish for."

The foot answered in a sulky and grieved tone: "You know very well that I no longer belong to myself. I have been bought and paid for. The old shopkeeper knew what he was about. He is still angry with you for having refused to marry him. It is a trick that he has played you. The Arab who broke open your coffin in the subterranean pit in the necropolis of Thebes, was sent by him. He wanted to prevent your going to the meeting of the people of the dark in the lower cities. Have you five gold pieces to redeem me?"

"Alas! no. My gems, my rings, my purses of gold and silver, all have been stolen from me," replied the Princess Hermonthis with a sigh.

"Princess," then exclaimed I, "never have I unjustly retained anybody's foot! Although you have not the five louis which it cost me, I give it back gladly. I should be in despair at making a cripple of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis."

I said this speech in a sort of troubadour tone, that must have surprised the beautiful Egyptian. She cast on me a glance of gratitude, and her eyes lighted up with a bluish glitter. She grasped her foot, which this time submitted, like a woman about to put on her shoe, and adjusted it on her leg with much skill. This operation finished, she walked two or three steps in the room, as if to assure herself that she was really no longer a cripple.

"Ah, how pleased my father will be, he who was so disconsolate at my mutilation, and who, from the day of my birth, set a whole people to dig me out so deep a tomb that it might preserve me intact until that supreme day when souls must be weighed in the scales of Amenti. Come with me to my father; he will receive you well; you have restored me my foot."

I thought this proposition a matter of course. I put on a dressing-gown with great figures, which gave me a

very Pharaonic air. In haste, I incased my feet in Turkish slippers, and I told the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting off, Hermonthis took from her neck the little green clay figure and laid it upon the scattered papers that covered my table.

"It is only right," said she smilingly, "that I should replace your paperweight."

She held out to me her hand, which was as soft and cold as an adder's skin, and we departed. For some time we shot with the rapidity of an arrow through a fluid and greyish medium, in which outlines scarcely visible passed on the right and on the left. For a moment, we saw only water and the sky. A few minutes later, obelisks began to loom up, and massive buildings and steps, bordered by sphinxs, became visible on the horizon.

We had arrived. The Princess led me before a mountain of rose granite, in which was an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish from the fissures of the stone, if two stelæ decorated with sculpture had not made it evident. Hermonthis lighted a torch and started off, walking ahead of me.

There were corridors hewn out of the living rock. The walls, covered with panels of hieroglyphics and allegorical processions, must have busied thousands of arms during thousands of years. These corridors, interminable in length, led into square chambers, in the middle of which were made shafts, which we descended by means of steps or winding stairs. These shafts brought us to other chambers, whence diverged other corridors, variegated, likewise, with hawks, coiled serpents, the tau, the crook, mystic boats, prodigious labour that no living eye was to look upon, interminable legends in granite that the dead alone had time to read in eternity.

At last we came into a hall so spacious, so enormous, so measureless, that the end of it could not be perceived. As far as the eye could reach, extended rows of monstrous columns, between which quivered livid stars of yellowish light—these shining points revealing incalculable depths.

The Princess Hermonthis still kept hold of my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance. My eyes grew accustomed to this dusky twilight and began to discern objects.

I saw, seated upon their thrones, the kings of the subterranean races, tall, dried-up old men, wrinkled, of parchment hue, black with naptha and bitumen, adorned with golden head dresses, barbed with breastplates and gorgets, studded with precious stones, with eyes fixed like those of a sphinx, and with long beard whitened by the snows of the centuries. Behind them their embalmed people stood, in the stiff and constrained postures of Egyptian art, preserving eternally the attitude perscribed by the hieratic codex. Behind the people their contemporary cats, ibises, and crocodiles mewed, flapped their wings, and sneered, made more monstrous still by their swaddling bands.

All the Pharaohs were there, Cheops, Kephren, Psammatichus, Sesostris, Amenophis—all the dark lords over the pyramids and tombs. Up on a more elevated platform sat King Chronos, and Xisuthrus, who lived at the time of the flood, and Tubal Cain, who preceded him.

The beard of King Xisuthrus had grown so that it had already wound seven times around the granite table on which he leant, musing and somnolent.

Farther away, in a dusty vapour, through the mist of eternities, I could vaguely distinguish the seventy-two pre-Adamite kings, with their seventy-two nations, now forever banished.

Having allowed me to enjoy this dizzy spectacle for several minutes, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to Pharaoh her father, who nodded to me very majestically.

"I have found my foot again! I have found my foot again!" cried the Princess, clapping her little hands with all the marks of frantic joy. "This is the gentleman who gave it back to me!"

The Keme races, the Nashi races, all the black, bronzed, copper-coloured races repeated in chorus: "The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!"

Xisuthrus himself was moved. He raised his heavy eyelids, passed his fingers through his moustache, and cast upon me a glance burdened with the weight of centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of hell, and by Tmei, the daughter of the sun and of truth, this is a brave and worthy boy," said Pharaoh, pointing towards me with his lotus-tipped sceptre. "What do you want for your reward?"

Emboldened by that audacity belonging to dreams, in which nothing appears impossible, I asked for the hand of Hermonthis. The hand for the foot seemed to me an antithetical reward in very good taste.

Pharaoh opened his glassy eyes wide in surprise at my jest and request.

"What country do you belong to, and how old are you?"

"I'm a Frenchman, and I'm twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old, and he wants to marry the Princess Hermonthis who is thirty centuries old!" cried at once all the thrones and all the circles of nations.

Hermonthis alone did not appear to find anything unreasonable in my demands.

"If you were only two thousand years old," replied the aged King, "I would very willing give you the Princess; but the disproportion is too great; and then our daughters must have husbands that last. You don't know any longer how to preserve yourselves. The last ones brought here, hardly fifteen centuries ago, are now nothing more than a pinch of ashes. Look; my flesh is as hard as basalt, my bones are bars of steel. I shall be at the last day of the world with the same body and face I had when I was alive. My daughter, Hermonthis, will last longer than a bronze statue. Then the wind will have dispersed the last speck of your dust, and Isis, who succeeded in finding the fragments of Osiris, would be troubled to bring your body together once more. See how vigorous I am still and what a grip I have," said he, shaking my hand in the English fashion and making my rings cut into my fingers.

He gave me such a squeeze that I woke up, and I saw my friend Alfred, who was tugging at my arm and shaking me to rouse me out of my sleep.

"Well, you sound sleeper, must I carry you out into the street and let off some fireworks in your ears? It is past noon. Don't you remember you promised to come and take me to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"Dear me, I had forgotton all about it," said I while dressing. "We will go there at once. I have the tickets here on my table."

I stepped over to get it; but imagine my astonishment, when instead of the mummy's foot I had bought the day before, I saw the little green image put in its place by the Princess Hermonthis.

Seymour Laird.

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THEY sat side by side on a big hearth-rug, gazing into the glowing coals. The one was a young man of perhaps twenty-eight, and the other an old dog of perhaps ten. That's not a criticism on the poverty of the English language. It simply shows how much more a dog can "get out of," or perhaps "put into," ten years than a man.

They sat there, anyway—young or old, young and old—and they gazed into the coals. And the young one blew great clouds of smoke out of a briarwood at the old one. But the old one did not mind. He was acclimatised.

It was in the cosy bachelor apartments of Neil Richards. Neil was a fellow who had succeeded, by dint of presumable study, money, and late nights, in getting through college in a commendable manner, seven years before. Since that time he had been engaged in the financial business. Not exactly as a legitimate broker, nor as a negotiator of loans, nor again as a pawnbroker, but in that pleasant line which on a business letter head, if he had owned such a thing, would have been expressed something like this: "Neil Richards, Income Spender, Pleasant Street, Easyville." Anyway, he had been travelling, intermittently, to improve himself, as the phrase goes, since the day he calmly, and with the most approved senioric gravity, tucked a sheepskin under his arm, and discarded his cap and gown.

But after his peripatetic streak, he went back again at last to his old rooms, in his favourite seat on the hearthrug, with his dog beside him and—in love. The fellows at the club had said several weeks past, as Richards would excuse himself, get up, and go out about nine o'clock of an evening: "Funny about Neil, isn't it? He leaves us every night at nine o'clock, and goes home, and they say he sits down and talks to that old dog General of his till midnight. Surely he must be in love."

And the fellows were right. Neil was hopelessly, fearfully, and miserably in love. Her name was Dorcas—Dorcas Howland, not a particularly pretty name, nor a particularly pretty girl, but a girl with such a wealth of sweetness, tact, common sense, and intelligence, that more would have made her a curiosity.

Neil had seen her at what is known as a large affair one evening, two months ago, was presented, murmured his platitudes, had a waltz, and immediately put her on a pedestal. He had seen her a few times since, once driving, when he received a bow that kept him absent-minded for a week, and on a few other occasions at the house of a friend, where he had passed some of the shortest quarter hours of his existence talking to her.

And that was as far as he had gone. It isn't exactly strange, then, is it, that when a man almost deifies a girl he has known only two months, he should like to sit down on a hearth-rug and talk to an old dog he has known for ten years? A club, brandy-and-sodas, gossip, and late hours are no solace at all, under such circumstances.

But we left them on the hearth-rug gazing into the coals. "You see, General, it's like this: I'm in love—desperately in love—and Miss Howland doesn't care a rap for me. Probably thinks I am just like the rest of them, looking for her money, when I'm really not. You understand, General, that I'm not?"

The General blinked sympathetically, and looked hard at the coals. Neil threw an arm affectionately round the dog.

"You see, I like to tell you these things, old boy, because you never say anything about them." There was silence for a few moments, while Richards meditatively pulled away at his pipe and the dog pensively thought of his puppy-hood and its loves. "She's so sweet and dainty!" at last continued Neil. "How she would brighten up a home for us, wouldn't she, General?" The dog turned his head, and looking at his master, reached one great paw over and laid it on Richard's knee. "Shake, is it, old man? Well, here goes. I thought you felt as I did. Now, General, you and I must scheme how to get her." The dog thumped his tail appreciatively on the rug, and they both went to work staring at the coals again.

And so they sat on, Neil solemnly meditative, the General silently sympathetic. It was a good hour later when Neil's pipe had burnt out, and the dog's head had drowsily fallen against his shoulder, that Richard heard

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the lift bell ring, and a moment after the upward rush of the car. Then, as the lift stopped at his landing, he heard the voice of old Barker saying: "Yes, sir, Mr. Richards is always in at nights now, sir. I am sure you will find him still up. Door to the right, sir; and do be careful sir, not to go to the left, as thems Miss Stevens' apartments, sir, and no one is allowed to disturb her, sir, till I takes her up her cup of tea, and the saucer of milk for the grey cat, sir, at half after——" but the remainder of the old man's loquacity was muffled by the sound of voices.

"Some of the boys come to drag me out on one of their infernal midnight romps, I suppose," said Richards to himself, with a discontented sigh. "They did that only three nights ago. Why can't they let a poor devil smoke his pipe in peace?"

Then as footsteps approached the door, he arose and surveyed himself in a long mirror at the end of the room. He did not look very presentable, he admitted. His hair was ruffled, his clothes were full of tobacco ashes, and he hadn't, when he sat down, even taken the trouble to don a lounging jacket, hence was in his shirt-sleeves.

"But who cares?" remarked Richard to himself. "If these stupid night hawks will come here at such an hour, they will have to take things as they find them. Suppose they will have something to drink, however." As he turned to the cabinet set in the side of the room, with his back to the door, and reached for decanters and glasses, a knock sounded, and a cheery voice shouted: "Oh, Neil,—I say, Neil,—I'm coming in."

"Come in if you must," was the reply. "Bring them all in; you are never alone. You and your gang are, without exception, the most unexcelled set of thoughtless, revelling, peace-disturbers I know of. You fellows have been at this thing for ten years," continued Neil, "you know you have, Bob" (still busy with the decanters). "Don't you ever intend giving it up? Why don't you fellows say something? This is no monologue."

By this time Richard had succeeded in extricating the troublesome decanters from the mass of bottles and glasses, and, turning round, faced the door. To his amazement, instead of the crowd of merry faces he had expected to see peering in at him, he saw only two. One was that of Bob Cutting, his chum, and the other —was that—of Dorcas Howland. The door was wide open.

She stood a little in front. Cutting was in the doorway.

The gleam from the dying coals, and the ruddy reflection from a lamp with a big red shade over in the corner, brought out every detail of her face and figure.

And Neil stood, with a decanter in each hand, coatless and dusty and speechless. The silence did not last long, however. Miss Howland smiled, bowed sweetly to Neil, and stepped into the room. "Good-evening, Mr. Richards," she said, and held out her hand. Neil managed in a dazed sort of way, to set down the decanter that was in his right hand without breaking it, and accepted the offered hand.

Bob Cutting looked on and smiled. "Too astounded to speak, Mr. Richards?" remarked the young woman. "Well, an explanation is due to you. Then you may not think me so utterly indiscreet as appearances would seem to warrant. Mr. Cutting, will you kindly try to put matters straight, and at the same time assure Mr. Richards that we are his guests? His accent, as I recollect it, is a pleasing one. 'For this is no monologue you know,'" and she smiled pleasantly at Neil.

"Yes," broke in Cutting, as Miss Howland paused; "you see, Neil, it's like this. It does look funny I admit, but I was walking home with Dorcas—er—Miss Howland, from some working girls' club she engineers, and we were chatting about picturesque bachelor apartments, or rather, I was describing some of them to her that I know the best, and I struck yours. I think I must have grown eloquent in my description, for Miss Howland insisted that she must see these famous apartments, of which, by the way, all the girls have heard. Knowing it would be all right, so far as you were concerned, I proposed we come over to-night and make you a call, though"—as he looked round the room—"I really didn't think she'd come."

Neil, during the recital, had quite recovered himself, and privately decided that if a man and a girl were willing to take the social risk he surely could meet them half-way. So he calmly placed the other decanter on a table, and turning to them, remarked: "I am very glad to see you. This is a little bit out of the ordinary, but the unexpected is quite often the pleasantest. Won't you sit down, Miss Howland? I am extremely sorry that your visit to my den couldn't have been made under more favourable circumstances, at one of my little teas, for instance. Under other than the present circumstance I should feel that an apology was due for my personal appearance. I am quite aware that I have no coat on, that my hair is untidy, and that I have a general and virulent attack of the malady bachelor-at-homeness. However, I shan't apologise."

And then the democratic Neil pulled up two big armchairs, and, having seen his guests cosily seated before the replenished fire, calmly and coatlessly resumed his place on the hearth-rug beside the General. Miss Howland looked surprised, but said nothing.

Then she reached over and patted the silky head of the dog.

He took the caress in a dignified sort of way, but nestled closer, if possible, to Richards. "What a handsome fellow," she softly said; "and how much he thinks of his master," she added to herself.

The three chatted away together about bachelor dens, people, and other generalities for some time, when suddenly Miss Howland rose and, turning to Cutting, said: "I wonder if you'd mind granting me one more favour. I wish to have a little talk with Mr. Richards alone." She paused a moment. "I know it's unconventional, but the rest of this is, also, and I know you won't take it amiss, will you?"

"Not at all," Cutting answered. "Suppose I manipulate the ivories while you have your talk. Don't feel that it must be abbreviated on my account, but when you get through, why, do as they do in the plays, ring for me, and, like the footman, I'll appear. Is it feasible?"

"Quite so, thank you," answered the girl, "it's so good of you." And, with a pipe in one hand and a tobacco jar in the other, Bob vanished through the door, and a moment later the click of billiard balls announced that he had found occupation.

The girl turned to Richards. He had risen with Cutting and had now donned a smoking jacket, in which somehow, he felt better equipped for his strange *tête-à-tête*. As his eyes sought hers she looked him frankly in the face, and simply asked:

"Mr. Richards, what do you think of me?"

Richards was silent for a moment, and then, with his eye on the dog at his feet, said:

"Shall I tell you frankly?"

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"Yes, please do," answered the girl.

He looked up. "I think you have lots of courage, are a bit injudicious, and, of course, did not come here without reasons."

She smiled. "You are frank, but don't you think it rude to assume the *rôle* of inquisitor in your first remark?"

"But you asked me, didn't you?" he gently replied.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said.

She stood absently looking down at shaggy General, sleeping peacefully on the hearthrug. Richards watched her a minute, and then, stepping forward, said softly: "Please sit down, Miss Howland, and then you can tell me as much as you wish."

A grateful look flashed into her face as she took the big chair he offered her, and sank into it a little wearily. Leaning back, she scrutinised the well-cut, thoughtful face of the man. He had taken his place beside the dog again, and as he sat staring at the coals in the flickering firelight, he seemed even handsomer than ever.

She looked at him a moment, and without moving said: "Mr. Richards, I've come here to-night on a queer mission. I wish advice. I wish to tell you something about myself, and then I want you to advise me as to what you think I ought to do. I have come to you under circumstances peculiar, to say the least, for these reasons: First, because what I have seen of you has led me to think you honest, frank, and sincere; second, because your friends assure me I am right. This has led me to believe you will be willing to overlook what might be construed as unwomanly, and, in addition, will be willing to help me in trouble. Am I right?" she hesitatingly asked.

"Yes, Miss Howland, you are," he replied, "people who know anything about you could not misinterpret your actions. Don't think circumstances affect me; but just tell me plainly what I can do for you."

"I thought you would take it so," she said in a tone of relief. "And now I'll tell you what I wish to, and pray don't regard it as a girl's whim—as a peculiar girl's whim—but simply try to assume the *rôle* of a willing listener and an impartial adviser. You see," she continued, "I have no one to go to. I am alone in the world. My parents are both dead, and I live with an elderly aunt, who is as good to me as anyone could be, but with whom I have absolutely nothing in common." The girl smiled thoughtfully. "She likes her tea and cat, her Goldsmith and Thackeray, early hours, and to be left alone. I am different. She is sixty-eight, and that's the reason, I presume. Besides, she was never married. And now, Mr. Richards, I have come to the place where I hardly know what to say. It's about my marrying. A funny thing to consult you about, isn't it? You see, ever since I was a child it has been taken for granted that when I grew up I should marry a certain individual. My parents both considered it a settled matter, my aunt the same; and, I suppose, as a child, I followed the general example. That man was Bob Cutting. We played together as children, living in adjacent houses, and virtually grew up together. I remember we used to have mock marriage ceremonies at which he and I always figured as the principals, with some other youngster as the clergyman, and we always looked forward to the time when as 'grown ups' our marriage might be made 'real.' So matters drifted along. The children's play stopped a good many years ago; but Bob has kept coming to see me just the same.

"And now—well, he wished to carry out in earnest what was begun in play. A few nights ago he asked me to be his wife."

The girl leant forward and absently smoothed the General's head, as he lay there watching the coals. Presently she said:

"Mr. Richards, then, and not till then, did I find I did not love him. But," she added, "I did not tell him so. I said only: 'We've been friends since we were children. Come to me next Monday night, and I will give you my answer.'"

For a moment she sat without speaking; then she concluded:

"Mr. Richards, you are Bob Cutting's dearest friend. He has but one friend like you. No man has—no man can have—no man wishes more. I come to you and ask you, who know him so well, what shall I do?

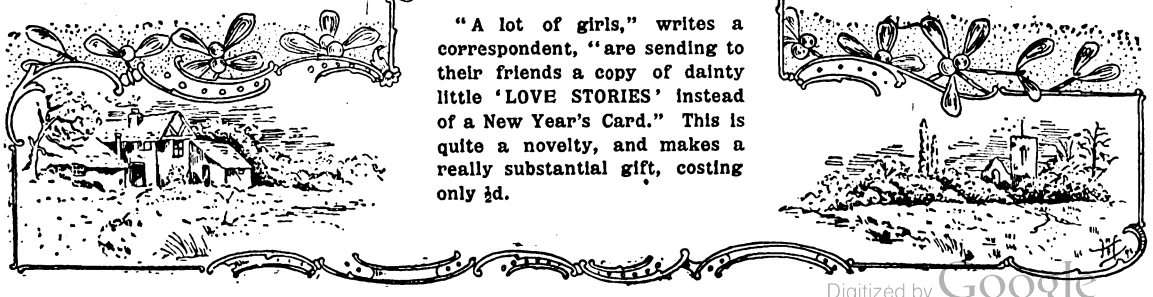
"Shall I tell him on Monday night that I'll marry him, or shall I say 'no'? Is it selfish in a girl placed as I am to think of her own future, or ought I to give it up to him? He has been good to me; so good to me; I like him, but I do not love him."

And then she leant wearily back in her chair, and fixed her eyes on Richards. He did not look up. He did not seem to realise her presence.

She watched him, and he watched the red embers glow, crumble, and fade into ashes. The dog whined in his sleep.

Then, finally, Richard raised his head, and quietly said:

"Miss Howland, I think it would be very wrong for you to marry Bob. As you say, I know him well. He is a fellow with such wealth of love for those he cares for, that if he finds it is not reciprocated he is miserable



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Think what a lifetime of it would mean to him. And now, you see, in what I've said so far I've considered only Bob. I think you ought also to consider yourself. Two lives are involved; and why should they both be ruined? You are both young. If I were you I should tell Bob, in the kindest way possible, that I did not love him. He will grieve at first, but I think when he finds out you were not for him he will see that it's for the best, and afterwards thank you. And, as for yourself, Miss Howland, when you have done this you can say, 'I've done my duty; I've done right,' and some day"—the man hesitated—"and some day perhaps some other good man will come along, and ask you to marry him; and the past, with its Bob, and its trouble"—and again he hesitated—"and its visit to Richards and the General will be a ghostly vision, which happiness and sunshine will soon wipe away."

"Thank you," she said cordially. "You've been very good. You'll return my visit some time, won't you?"

Richard took her hand, and holding it for a moment, said quietly: "I thank you; I will come. But before you go, I want to ask you just one question. Don't answer it unless you wish to. You told me that you don't love Bob; is it—is it because there's someone else?"

She waited a moment, and then replied firmly:

"No; there's no one else."

A moment later Cutting joined them in response to Richards' summons. As he stood before the fire, pulling on his gloves, he looked at each other good-humouredly, and said: "I'm awfully glad that you have become better acquainted; but I hope you haven't been engaged in the pleasing occupation of condemning a mutual friend. I see you've made friends with General, also, Miss Howland," he concluded.

"Yes," she replied; "General and I are the best of friends," and she leant over and softly patted the handsome head. "And General's master and I are going to be, too, are we not, Mr. Richards?"

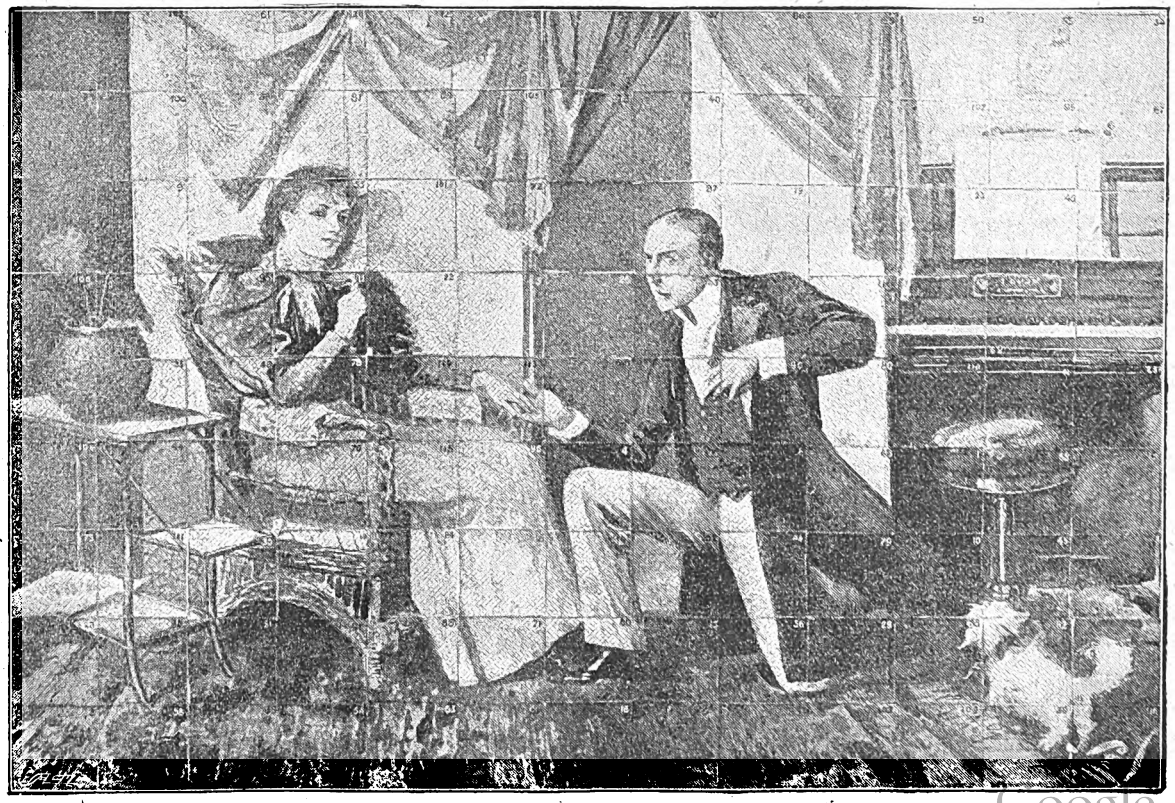
"Yes, we are going to be—that is, I hope so," Richards said slowly.

* * * * *

The next moment she was gone.

Of course it's obvious. Love does not need to be diagrammed. And, of course, a year later, when the big house had its awning, and its carpeted steps, and its music, and its flowers, all was quite as it should be. And of course their friends heard the Mendelssohn march, and threw rice, and wished them joy. And Bob Cutting was best man? Of course not. And did the Mother Grundies shrug their white shoulders, and say: "What a beautiful bride, but I wonder how she could have done it; they say she was engaged to another?" Of course they did. And that is love, and about the way it generally turns out. Of course. HARRY PECK.

Correct solution to the Picture Puzzle in **PEARSON'S WEEKLY EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER.** ***Figure-key appears on Page 25. The list of winners will be found in*** **PEARSON'S WEEKLY,** ***dated January 1st.***



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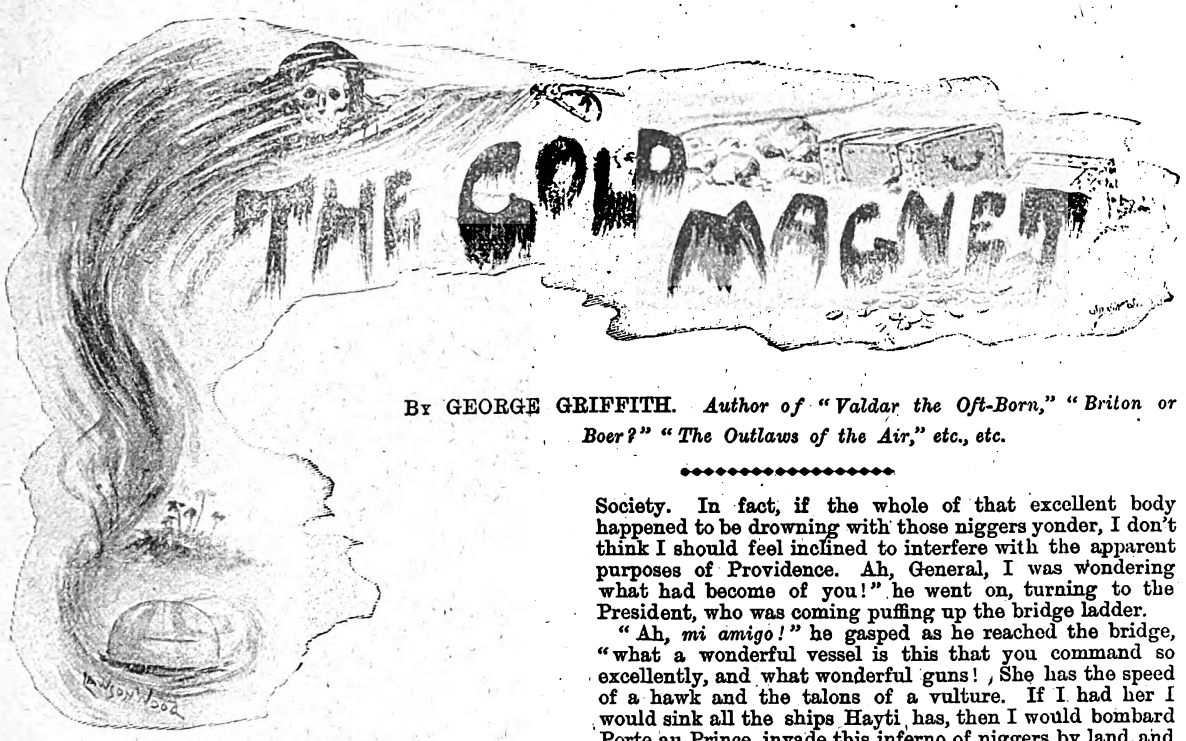

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH. *Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

HER LADYSHIP LOOKS BACK.

SHE took her hands from her ears and raised her head, half expecting to hear the banging of the guns and the continuous roar of the Nordenfeldt still shaking the air about her. But, instead, she heard nothing but the accustomed sounds of the yacht's engines, and the whistling of the surplus steam from the pipes, and the lap and swish of the waves against her sides as she drove through the water, for Lorrain had already signalled for half-speed, and was running down to join the *Independencia*.

She looked ahead to where the *Dessalines* had been, and saw only a few dark objects bobbing about in the midst of a grey swirl of water.

"Where is the other ship?" she said, looking up with wondering, frightened eyes at Lorrain. "I mean the one that you were fighting?"

"She's on her way to the bottom in two or three pieces," he replied, smiling one of his pleasantest smiles at her. "The last two shots from the dynamite guns blew up her boilers, and I suppose that broke her back. Anyhow, she went down almost immediately."

"And what about the unfortunate people on board her? Are those dark-looking things in the water yonder——?"

Lorrain nodded, and said:

"Yes, those are some of them. Niggers, and about the vilest specimens of their kind that exist. The sort of people who don't take prisoners, except to amuse themselves with in a humourous and lingering sort of way, you know."

"Ugh! I understand. Horrible! But aren't you going to save them? They can't do us any more harm now, can they?"

"Not until we'd rescued them, and fed them and set them free on land again. Then they'd take the first opportunity of returning our kindness after their own peculiar style," he replied with another laugh.

"No, your ladyship, I don't propose to rescue them any more than I would rescue a lot of drowning rats, or any other vermin. I don't belong to the Aborigines Protection Society. In fact, if the whole of that excellent body happened to be drowning with those niggers yonder, I don't think I should feel inclined to interfere with the apparent purposes of Providence. Ah, General, I was wondering what had become of you!" he went on, turning to the President, who was coming puffing up the bridge ladder.

"Ah, *mi amigo!*" he gasped as he reached the bridge, "what a wonderful vessel is this that you command so excellently, and what wonderful guns! She has the speed of a hawk and the talons of a vulture. If I had her I would sink all the ships Hayti has, then I would bombard Porte au Prince, invade this inferno of niggers by land, and in a week or two all the island would be mine."

"And in the meantime, General," laughed Lorrain, "it might be as well if we went on to San Domingo and saw how matters were getting on there, eh? I presume you intend to re-take your own capital by way of a beginning?"

"With your help, if you will give it me, Señor Don Francisco, assuredly that is the best thing to be done," he replied, holding out both his fat hands towards Lorrain. "Help me to do that, and anything that the Republic or its President can give is yours."

"We'll talk about that when we've got you settled in the palace again, General," said Lorrain good humouredly. "Of course you will understand that, although I am more than pleased to be able to do what I can in support of lawfully constituted authority, I didn't come here on a purely philanthropic expedition. However, that will do later on. Meanwhile, will you be good enough to order the *Independencia* to follow us to Santo Domingo? We had better hurry on before your friend Manuelo has time to make too much hay of the place."

As soon as the gunboat came within hail the General ordered her alongside and made a pompous little speech to those on board on the subject of the glorious victory that someone else had won for him. He then told them how he was going back to retake his capital from the rebels, or to lay it in ashes with the terrible guns which had blown the *Dessalines* out of the water. This, naturally, produced a cheer from the gallant sailors and marines and fugitive politicians, who began to feel very brave now that there was no longer an enemy to run away from.

Then the two vessels dipped their flags to each other with due decorum and ceremony, and the *Minnehaha* swung her bow round to the westward again and headed away for Santo Domingo, at twenty-five knots, followed by the *Independencia*, doing a laborious fourteen.

When Lorrain had handed her ladyship down from the bridge he told her with a meaning smile that her husband should be at once released, so that he could keep her company while he had a talk on business matters with the

General. Of course he knew perfectly well when he said this that the very last person in the world she wished to see just then was her husband, but he had his own reasons for wishing them to have a little conjugal chat together, and when he had reasons he was not accustomed to consider either the wishes or the feelings of other people.

She was, however, spared the ordeal for the present, for Sir Langton saw fit to assert his outraged dignity by declining to leave his own state-room until Lorrain had apologised to him, and his wife had come to express her regret for what he called her improper and unwifely conduct. It need hardly be added that neither had the slightest intention of doing anything of the kind.

He had sent his message to his wife in a note by her maid. When she had looked over it she sent the girl back to say there was no answer for the present, and then she walked aft, tearing the note into little pieces, and when she reached the stern she leant on the rail and dropped them over into the swirl of water that was seething up under the flying vessel's quarters.

Then she stood there looking out over the yacht's long white wake, thinking of all that had happened on that momentous morning, and wondering what was to be the outcome of it.

There could be no mistaking Lorrain's intentions now. In that moment when the brief battle was at its height, he had either purposely or involuntarily dropped the mask that he had so far worn, and he was hardly the man to do anything without deliberate intention. He had told her in so many words that he did not intend to live without her, or let her live without him. If that meant anything it meant that he loved her, and would take her by force if necessary.

But there came another thought less pleasant and even more disquieting than this one: Did he really love her and want her for herself, or did he mean to take her only so that he might gain possession of the priceless treasure that so far she had never let out of her keeping night or day?

And her husband? What was to be his fate, now that he was not only superfluous, but an obstacle which she felt Lorrain would strike from his path with as little compunction as he had left the survivors of the *Dessalines* to drown?

During the short time that the battle lasted she had learnt to know him better than she could have done in a year of quiet acquaintance. She had heard him give the orders that had carried death and destruction with them as coolly as he would have told the steward to bring another bottle of wine to the dinner-table, and he had heard the whistling of the enemy's shells about his ship with as little concern as he had listened to the cries of the sea-birds which followed the yacht.

Morally and physically he was absolutely master of the situation, and she and her husband were as completely in his power as little Arthur Pendril—who was just then sobbing with the after-terror of the fight in his berth—was in hers and his.

She had herself deliberately faced the possible necessity of putting this helpless child out of the way rather than allow him to imperil the position she had so rapidly and so skilfully won. She had got him on board the yacht with the intention that he should never return to the world of civilisation, but she shrank in terror and horror from the double crime which would make her equal in wickedness to Sybil Viney herself.

And yet if Lorrain demanded such guilty complicity from her, how was she to resist? This, then, was to be the outcome of her first crime and the successful scheming that had followed. Her tortured thoughts went back to the night when she was cowering behind the screen in the Professor's study, and she said to herself: "I would give my soul to get that thing." Now she had got it, and it seemed as though the price were about to be demanded from her.

Sir Langton did not appear at lunch. She had not heard him moving in his state-room when she went to hers to wash her hands, and when she sat down to table Lorrain, seeing her look inquiringly at his vacant chair, said quietly and almost apologetically:

"I suppose you are surprised at not seeing your husband here, Lady Pendril. I regret to say that he has seen fit to adopt such a preposterous line of conduct that I have been compelled to place him in confinement for the present."

"In confinement!" she echoed falteringly, and looking at him with undisguised fear in her eyes. "Why, what has he done?"

"I had a talk with him while you were on deck," he replied, "and he behaved in a fashion that I can only describe as ridiculous. He roundly accused me of piracy and murder, and vowed that the first opportunity he had of communicating with a British consul or man-of-war he would denounce me and have me handed over to what he calls 'justice.'

"Naturally my own protection demanded that I should, for the present at any rate, make it impossible for him to carry out such absurd threats. As you know, the business we are on is one that requires a certain amount of secrecy, and any untimely misrepresentations of that sort might ruin the whole thing. At the same time, of course, I can promise you that he shall be released as soon as it is safe for me to do so."

There was a sinister, although almost imperceptible, emphasis on the word "safe" which sent a chilly shudder through her nerves, and set her wondering for the moment whether she had already seen her husband for the last time.

"I am very sorry," she said, looking down at her plate, "very sorry indeed, but of course you are master here, and he had no right to question your actions, at least, not while he was enjoying your hospitality. Would you like me to go and have a talk with him after lunch? Perhaps I can bring him to a more reasonable frame of mind."

"You can, of course, do so if you wish, Lady Pendril," replied Lorrain, in rather a chilly tone. "Personally, I should think it would be better if he had a few hours to himself to think things over and cool down a little. To tell you the truth," he went on with an added meaning in his look and voice, "your husband appears to be even more incensed against you, whatever reason he may have for that, than he is against myself."

"Then in that case," she said, returning his glance as steadily as she could, "perhaps I had better take your advice for the present."

When they went up on deck again after lunch the opening of the harbour of Santo Domingo lay dead ahead of the yacht, and the white buildings of the ancient city of Columbus were distinctly visible on the port bow. Lorrain again invited her ladyship on to the bridge and the General also climbed the ladder after them. The yacht was slowed down to twelve knots and steamed in towards the bar. About a mile from the city Lorrain stopped her and said to the General:

"I see they've got a red flag flying over the citadel. I suppose that means that the rebels have got the town at their mercy, and if so they must be turned out. Would you prefer to open fire now, or shall we wait for the *Independencia*? She'll be over an hour coming up yet, I should think, and we can knock the citadel about their ears by that time. What do you think, General?"

"I leave it all in your hands, *amigo*," replied the President. "You are commander-in-chief here. Do as seems best to you."

"Very well," said Lorrain. "I don't believe in losing time at anything, especially fighting, so I shall begin at once. Captain Peters, just see what sort of practice you and Mr. Lennox can make at that building there with a red flag above it, and hoist a couple more Dominican flags at the mastheads so that they can see who we are. Then they'll know what we've come for. We've got to make the place too hot to hold them by nightfall."

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The exploding dynamite played frightful havoc.

"Right, seenyor!" replied the Captain, "there's mighty little difficulty about that. I reckon dynamite won't take much account of venerable ruins like that. If you'll run her in under the point there we'll be able to get a square sight at it and start the circus right away."

While the yacht was running into the desired position it became evident that her arrival, flying the flags of the lately expelled President, had created not a little excitement in the city. The ramparts and bastions facing the river and the bay mounted a few old muzzle-loading guns that were nearly as old as the century, and from the bridge of the *Minnehaha* men could be seen running to these as though to load and train them upon her.

As the range was considerably under a mile, Lorrain ordered the Nordenfeldt and two of the Maxims to play on the ramparts while the two forward dynamite guns and one of the after ones concentrated their fire on the citadel. As soon as the guns were loaded and trained, he gave the order to fire, and the beautiful, harmless looking yacht was instantly transformed into something like a floating volcano, spouting out clouds of smoke and sheets of flame, and hurling storms of projectiles on the ramparts and the citadel.

For a few minutes the ancient guns of the half-dismantled batteries replied with a fitful feebleness and shockingly bad aim, and then the fire from the city stopped entirely, for the simple but sufficient reason that those who had survived the brief storm of bullets had fled helter-skelter to the nearest places of comparative safety.

Lorrain at once ordered the machine-guns to cease firing, but the dynamite guns continued to throw shell after shell into the citadel and arsenal. The exploding dynamite played frightful havoc with the old mud and stone walls, and at last a couple of shells struck the signal tower, on which the red flag was flying, together. The force of the combined explosions sent the upper part of it flying in fragments far and wide, and when the cloud of dust and smoke had drifted away the red flag had vanished.

"I think that will do for the present," said Lorrain. "Cease fire, Captain, but keep all the guns loaded and trained, and be ready to open fire again the moment the flag goes up, if it does. Now, General, we'll wait for the *Independencia*. I think I see her smoke out yonder, and when she comes in you can send her captain ashore to demand the surrender of the town and the giving up the ring-leaders of the rebellion. If they refuse we'll just knock the place about their ears. I suppose your people ashore will have taken the hint and turned on the rebels by this time?"

"*De veredad, amigo!*" replied the General enthusiastically. "Of a certainty they will have done so or are doing so even now. You will soon hear the fighting in the streets. Your coming will give them new heart when they see how strong you are to help them, but you will not injure the town more than you can help, will you? It is somewhat ruinous in parts already, and it will cost a great deal to rebuild when we get back, and the treasury is not over full."

"That I can well believe, General," laughed Lorrain. "I don't suppose you'd be foolish enough to leave much behind you for that scoundrel Manuelo to steal. You are too good a president for that I should fancy."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRICE OF VICTORY.

THE *Independencia* came bustling into the bay about an hour later, and during this interval there had been a cessation of hostilities, as though by common consent, but no messages had been exchanged between the yacht and the shore. Lorrain was far too good a tactician to risk any of his scanty crew by putting them, even for a few minutes, into the power of the rebels, and although the shore batteries had ceased to fire on the yacht, possibly in the fear of provoking further reprisals from her terrible guns, the temptation of firing on a boat might have proved too strong for the prudence of the semi-savages in possession of the city.

On shore, however, fighting was going on fast and furious. The brief, but deadly cannonade from the yacht had proved to the defeated party that the fugitive President must have returned with some mysterious, but very formidable ally, and when the *Independencia* was made out in the distance, steaming into the harbour decked, like the yacht, with Dominican colours, the correct conclusion was immediately arrived at that the *Dessalines* had been sunk, and that the available naval force was entirely on the side of the lately-fugitive President.

This particular revolution, like all others of its kind, was based on no worthy motives or deep principles involving necessary revolt against intolerable tyranny. It was simply the armed struggle of one faction with another for the spoils of office. It was, in fact, not unlike a general election in this country, saving for the fact that it was conducted with bullets instead of ballot-papers.

In such struggles there are always large numbers of combatants on both sides whose loyalty is a mere matter of expediency and opportunity. Whichever side is getting the best of it for the time being receives deserters in plenty from the other, and it often happens that on these the ultimate issue of the fight depends.

It had been thus during the night-attack which the insurgent leader had made on the city. As the President had explained to Lorrain, it was not the strength and valour of Doctor Manuelo, but the treachery and defection of his own people that had compelled him to take flight.

But now the balance was swaying the other way. A President who could take flight in the morning a beaten man, sink his pursuer out at sea and come back in the early afternoon and knock the citadel to pieces, was apparently a good man to be on the same side with, and so, when the Presidential standard was again raised by his more faithful adherents, not only did the deserters come flocking back, but some hundreds of the Doctor's officers and men came with them, and a very pretty little battle was the result.

This was about at its height when the *Independencia* steamed up the river with guns trained and men at quarters, making quite an imposing show. In obedience to orders she had received as she passed the *Minnehaha*, she dropped a boat flying a white flag as she came to a standstill off the now half-ruined citadel.

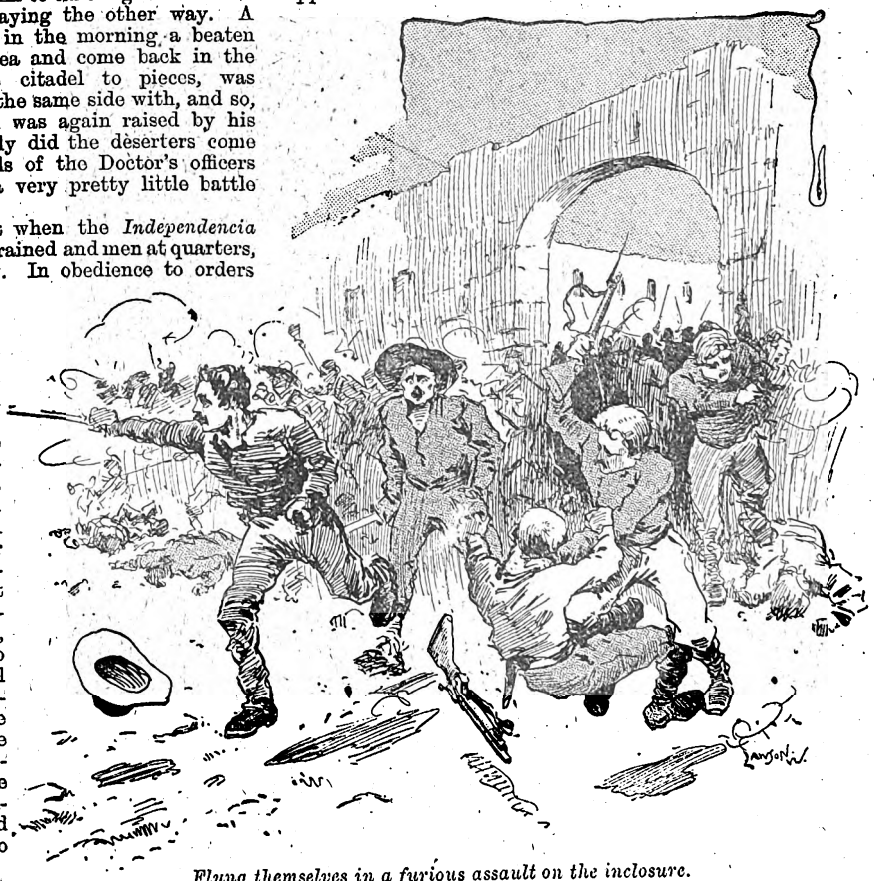
This boat carried an ultimatum from the President to Doctor Manuelo, demanding immediate cessation of hostilities and disarmament of the rebel forces under pain of bombardment. The taste that they had, had given them little appetite for more of the same kind, supplemented by the work of the eight quick-firing guns of the *Independencia*; and the dusky Doctor, under pressure amounting to threats from his principal supporters and the foreign residents in the city, threw up the sponge on condition that there should be no shootings or hangings afterwards, and that he and those leaders of the revolution who chose to do so should be permitted to retire into Haytian territory.

Whether or not this view of the situation would have commended itself to the President and his new ally it is hardly worth while to inquire, for while the boat was on its way to the *Minnehaha* the Government forces in the city, no doubt inspired by an added fervour of re-born loyalty, and a desire to atone for their earlier lapses, and possibly thinking, too, that dead revolutionists are more conveniently dealt with than living ones, took advantage of the lull in the fighting, and flung themselves in a furious assault on the inclosure in which the arsenal, citadel, and barracks stand.

This was now the last hold of the rebels, and they carried it with a rush, and settled the matter out of hand by a wholesale butchery, which ended with the suspension of Doctor Manuelo from the end of a pole thrust out of one of the lower windows of the citadel. It was not exactly in accordance with the rules of civilised warfare, but neither the state of Santo Domingo nor the world at large was any the poorer for it, and it had the advantage of simplifying matters a great deal.

Before sundown General Gregorio had landed and re-entered his capital with such pomp and circumstance of victory as the state of affairs permitted. The night was mostly spent in feasting and revelry, varied by a few summary executions and clearing up the streets, and by the following day Santo Domingo was little the worse for the revolution, save for the damage done to her antiquated fortifications and the loss of some hundreds of her citizens who had fallen victims to the coloured version of the divine rights of democracies.

The following day Her Majesty's cruiser *Magicienne* appeared off the harbour and sent a boat ashore. This



Flung themselves in a furious assault on the inclosure.

incident was not unconnected with a lively desire on the part of the British and French consuls to know more than Lorrain felt inclined to tell as to the true origin and character of the *Minnehaha*, and the result was a considerable amount of hard swearing as to the perfect legitimacy of her action under the orders of General Gregorio in support of his lawful authority. It remained, however, for Captain Hiram Peters to settle the matter by producing the yacht's American papers, running up the Stars and Stripes, and referring the British commander to the United States Foreign Office. The correspondence on the subject is probably going on still.

As soon as this little matter was disposed of, Lorrain had a long and private interview with the General in the palace on the subject of the price to be paid for the timely assistance of the *Minnehaha* and her guns, and this, after a certain amount of boggling on the part of the President, and some very firm and plain speaking from Lorrain, took the form of a concession which conferred upon him the privilege of searching without let or hindrance throughout the terri-

tory of the Dominican Republic for any precious metals, gems, or treasure, with full permission to work all deposits that he might discover, and to export whatever he might find free of duty and without examination.

In consideration of this Lorrain undertook to exert his influence in the raising of a second loan of a hundred thousand pounds to assist the President in the carrying out of certain developments of the natural resources of the country which, by a curious coincidence, were mostly comprised within the limits of his own estates.

When this important document had been duly sealed, signed, and delivered with a dispatch wholly foreign to the official and commercial traditions of the Republic, Lorrain took it back with him on board the yacht, which was lying off the town with her guns still mounted and loaded. He found her ladyship on deck amusing herself with the boy, to whom she appeared suddenly to have taken a strange and, indeed, unaccountable fancy, which seemed in singular contrast to the sinister designs which had taken her to St. Thomas.

"You appear to be getting great friends," he said, as he came beside her chair under the awning. "It is a pity that your interests are somewhat conflicting."

She coloured slightly as she looked up at him and said:

"Yes, it seems odd, doesn't it? but he is really a very nice little fellow, in spite of his—well—extraordinary origin. I really don't see why we shouldn't try and make things pleasant for the poor little fellow while—while——"

"Well, while he's with us. Suppose we put it that way," said Lorrain, with a smile. "Of course the poor little chap will be lonely, but still we've given him a pretty interesting time so far; haven't we, young man?"

The boy—who was a slim, active, gracefully-built little fellow, with a handsome but not altogether agreeable face—looked up at him and said quite collectedly:

"Yes; it was great fun, and I like you and Lady Jessica very much for bringing me to see it. When are you going to have some more fighting and shoot the cannons off again? I shan't be frightened next time."

"Well, you seem to have got over your fright pretty quickly," laughed Lorrain, "and I think I could make a man of you if I had the bringing up of you. How would you like him for an adopted son, Lady Pendril?"

Her ladyship stared at him for a moment in silence, then she beckoned to the boy's nurse and told her to take him away for the present. When the boy had gone she said rather coldly:

"What do you mean, Señor Lorrain?"

"Just what I said," he laughed, "and that after all wasn't very much. But really you know you looked so nice—I mean, of course, the two of you made such a pretty picture—as I came along the deck, that somehow the idea came naturally into my mind. He seems a nice little fellow, and it would be a pity if anything had to happen to him."

"I think we won't talk about that, please!" she said a trifle sharply. "Sufficient unto the day is the—well—the wickedness thereof. And talking of that," she went on after a moment's hesitation, "may I ask what you have done with my husband? I've somehow got an idea that he is no longer on board the ship."

"You are perfectly right, Lady Pendril," he said, pulling a deck chair up beside hers, and letting himself drop gracefully into it. "The fact is, that until Sir Langton comes to a much more reasonable frame of mind, he is capable of interfering so very seriously with our plans that it will be absolutely necessary to keep him in confinement, either until he can manage to take a more sensible view of the situation or till we have accomplished what we wish to do.

"For instance, suppose he had managed by any means to communicate with the lieutenant of the *Magicienne* when he was on board examining our papers, what do you suppose he would have thought of an English baronet being kept in durance vile on board a private yacht, that had just sunk a warship and bombarded a city? Why, in half-an-hour we should have been under the *Magicienne's* guns, and probably the whole lot of us would have been under arrest, pending a visit to Kingston and an inquiry which might have had the most unpleasant result for us.

"Well, now, I felt almost certain that either the *Magicienne*, or some other cruiser, would put in here as soon as rumours about yesterday's doing got about, and as I don't believe in taking any chances, I took the liberty of sending your husband ashore last night and handing him over to my friend Gregorio. You needn't disquiet yourself in the slightest about him. He is perfectly safe and unable to do any harm either to himself or to anyone else."

"You—you have not—I mean, nothing has happened to him, I hope!" she faltered. "Of course, he is being well treated, and is comfortable as well as what you call safe. I cannot consent to any violence or ill-treatment, you know. Surely I have been wicked enough already in all conscience, without consenting to any more crimes, and you must remember that he is my husband after all, even if he has behaved absurdly and put himself in the way."

"My dear Lady Pendril," he replied with the most ceremonious politeness, "I can assure you that you need not have the slightest anxiety on your husband's behalf. As I have told you, he is perfectly safe, and I can assure you once more that the very best possible care will be taken of him. But now I will ask you to grant me your confidence in that matter, to leave it absolutely to me, believing that I shall do the best I can for everyone; and then, for the present, dismiss it from your mind, for I have come to talk to you about something else of great importance."

"Very well," she said in a somewhat steadier tone; for in spite of the obvious double meaning of his words she knew it would be hopeless to attempt to make him speak more plainly. She knew, too, that for the present, at least, Lorrain's power over her was practically as absolute as it was over her husband, what ever had become of him, and that nothing could be gained by showing weakness. "I know," she went on, "that you are master of the situation, and I, for one, am perfectly prepared to trust to your generosity. Now what is it? Anything about the treasure?"

"Yes," he said, unfolding the paper which he was carrying in his hand, "yes, it is about that. Here is an authority from the Government which we have just put on its feet again, giving us all the rights and powers we want to go and hunt up Don Christobal's treasure-chest and bring it away with us if we can find it. It grants us several other things as well, but that is the most important just now. I have made all my arrangements on shore for a start. I propose, if things remain quiet, as I expect they will, that we shall make up a sort of picnic up the river to-morrow—a little prospecting party, in fact—just to see if the chest is where it is supposed to be, and to locate it exactly. That, of course, we cannot do without your assistance. And now, Lady Jessica," he went on in a lower and softer tone, laying his hand with almost imperceptible gentleness over hers as it lay on the arm of her chair, "I have curbed my natural curiosity about this wonderful Gold Magnet of yours until now—that is to say to the very eve of the expedition which depends for success entirely upon its powers—do you not think I have been patient enough? Marvellous as what you have told me about it is, I have taken your word for it with absolute confidence. I have never even asked you to show it to me. May I not see it now?"

As he said this his hand closed with a gentle, caressing pressure over hers, which said a thousand times more than his words. She shivered a little in the hot, breathless, afternoon air, and, drawing her hand away from his, she got up almost wearily, and said with a not very successful attempt at a smile:

"Well, yes. I don't see why you shouldn't. After all, it would not be very much use to me without your help. If you will come down into the cabin I will show it to you."

(To be continued.)

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TOM HENDERSON, THE MINER.

TOM HENDERSON sat alone in his rough cabin, buried in deep thought.

His elbows rested upon a board which covered the top of a barrel. Ever and anon he would stroke, or rather pull, the long, pointed beard which ornamented his chin. Then he would tap his forehead as though endeavouring to recall some scene of the long ago.

"I wish it would hurry up and get daylight; so that I could have another good look at the face that's here in this trinket," and he lifted a small gold locket from his improvised table.

"I know I have seen those features before," he muttered, "but where, I cannot tell. If my candles hadn't all burnt out I could be gazing at the picture now, but it won't be long to wait, because I can see a few rays of light stealing through the chinks of the wall.

"Funny that I should have picked up this thing on the mountain trail. Some poor pilgrim must have dropped it, 'cause I'll swear that none of the old men in camp ever 'toted' it about with them. I've seen some one that it puts me in mind of, but who, when, and where I've run acrost 'em, I don't know.

"Oh, pshaw!" continued the miner. "I don't see why I should be bothering my head about the matter. If it is the picture of some one I've seen in my younger days, it matters nothing to me, for hasn't Tom Henderson been dead to the world for many years?"

The lonely tenant of the cabin, however, could not shake off the fascination which the likeness seemed to possess for him, and again lifted the locket from the table. This time he turned it so that the feeble beam of morning which penetrated a small hole in the wall would fall directly upon it.

"It looks almost the same as my Margaret did when we were married. But it can't be her picture, for we never had anything of this kind in our house," he repeated. "Oh, there was a home!" and the voice of the miner choked with emotion as he recalled the scene.

"Home, wife, and daughter swept away in one night by the angry waters of the Missouri! Ah, well, it was the will of Providence! and I submit to the chastisement!"

With this remark Tom Henderson placed the trinket which had so much interested him in his pocket, and proceeded to start a fire in an old broken stove that he might cook a little breakfast before going down into the gulch to begin his day's labour.

The old rusty coffee-pot was steaming, and the salt pork was sizzling in the frying-pan when the door of the cabin was burst open, and a young man, perhaps twenty-five years old, fell prostrate upon the floor.

"Halloa! Halloa! What is this? Somebody in distress and hurt, too! There's blood all over him. Say, stranger, what is it? What's happened to ye? Who's been doing you up in this shape? Hey? Can't ye answer?"

A groan from the lips of the wounded man was the only response.

"You're hurt bad," observed the miner, bending over the form of his unannounced guest. "Hit hard, I should say you was! Why, somebody's been carving you up as though you was nothing more nor less'n a dead bullock.

"Tom!" continued the miner to himself, "I reckon you've got work enough right here in the cabin to-day without going down to the washings. This chap needs patching up mighty quick or else all the life that's in him will run out through the holes that some wicked cuss has made.

"Say, friend, ye speak, and let a poor 'pill-garlic' know who you are and how ye came to be in this shape? Wake up, man. You're in Tom Henderson's cabin, and there ain't a 'galoot' east nor west of the Sierras that would dare to trouble ye while you're in his keeping."

"Margaret, Margaret! Save her!" gasped the sufferer.

"Save Margaret!" exclaimed Tom. "Would to Heaven that I could have saved her years ago when she was calling to me for help from the cruel river. But who is your Margaret, stranger? Who is it, bearing that name, that needs a friend? Old Tom Henderson would lay down his life to help any woman who possesses that name."

"They have taken her somewhere. Torn her from my side and left me for dead." As though the exertion of speaking was more than the wounded man could bear he relapses into unconsciousness.

Tom made no attempt to recall the young man to his senses, for, as he muttered to himself: "The lad is not going to go under right away, I opinion, and he won't feel me patching him up half as much if I let him lay asleep."

Despite the rough manner of the miner, no woman's hand could more gently have dressed the wounds of the poor unfortunate than did he. Tenderly Tom lifted his guest and laid him on his own hard couch, and then he turned to partake of his breakfast, the preparation of which had been so unexpectedly broken in upon.

As he sipped the pot of strong coffee, Henderson soliloquised: "I wouldn't be afraid to gamble my pile that Jim Darnley has had a hand in this affair. I know that he with some of his crew are back again in these parts. Now, if I find that it is that villain's work there be considerable excitement in this camp, and old Judge Lynch will be master of ceremonies!

"Eh? what did you say?" asked Tom, as a moan from his patient attracted his attention.

"Where have you taken her? Give her back to me,

or I will tear your heart out!" Thus exclaiming, the wounded man sprang to his feet, and clutched Tom fiercely by the throat.

"Hold on, hold on, stranger. You never was put up right to pull me to pieces, even in your best days, so how can ye expect to stand much show when you haven't more'n an ounce of strength. Take it easy, take it easy, and tell me what it is about this Margaret. I'm your friend, and will do all I can to help you and her too."

The stranger sank back upon the bed, but sat with glaring eyes riveted upon Tom. At length, as reason began to return, he murmured:

"Oh, yes; I remember all, now. The stage was stopped, a short fight ensued, I was struck down, and I saw my wife borne away in the grasp of one of the burly ruffians."

"What did you say?" exclaimed Tom. "'Stage held up!' It's funny I didn't hear anything about it. But then, how could I? I haven't been down to the hotel for a week. But how did you happen to tumble in here? The stage don't come within a mile of this place, it drives down through the canyon."

"I tried to follow in pursuit of the robbers who were bearing away my bride. Although it was dark, I noticed that they ascended the mountain. I crawled on after them, climbing higher and higher until I fell exhausted across your threshold."

"It's mighty funny how I happened to miss ye."

"Miss me?" feebly asked the wounded man. "What do you mean?"

"Mean? I mean that I climbed the trail after dark last night, and I didn't see anybody, but I picked up a mighty handsome picture. Maybe it belongs to some of the folks in the stage. Did you ever see it before?" and Tom Henderson drew the locket, which had interested him so much, from his pocket and handed it towards his companion.

"Why, it belongs to me, and that is the likeness of my wife."

"Say, young man," returned Tom, bending a look upon the stranger that was almost fierce in its intensity. "Is that the picture of your wife?"

"Yes, yes, it is."

"Then tell me what was her name before the parson made you two one."

"Margaret Henderson."

"And how old might she be, stranger?" The voice of the miner trembled as he asked the question.

"Scarcely nineteen."

"And was the young girl's father or mother alive when you married?"

"No, she was an orphan. Her parents were drowned during a flood along the banks of the Missouri, when my Margaret was but a child. She was rescued. Was found, so it was stated, floating on a piece of timber."

"Great Heaven! Is it possible!" exclaimed Henderson, excitedly. "Stranger, you stay here. Don't leave the cabin until I return."

"Where are you going?"

"To wrest from the clutches of that villain Darnley your Margaret, *my* Margaret, your wife, my daughter," and the infuriated miner rushed forth from the cabin, leaving his guest spellbound with astonishment.

About the hotel of Wagle's Pass were loitering the usual number of miners, gamblers, and chronic loafers.

The were absorbed in the interesting account of the robbery of the stage coach the night before, which was being retailed to them by a heavy-whiskered, beetling-browed individual, who claimed to be one of the victimised passengers.

"Whoever did the job, did it in good shape," remarked the narrator. "There were only three of them, but they called 'hands up' before any man of us could pull a gun. So you see, although I hate to cave in and shell out my dust without making a fight, I had to weaken, or else go under."

"But who was it held ye up?" asked one of the bystanders.

"That's what I'd like to know," was the reply.

"Then if you'd like to know who stopped that stage last night, I'll tell you!" It was Tom Henderson that spoke.

"Yes, boys, I'll tell you who it was. It was Jim Darnley, and there he stands! Up hands, Jim! I've got you covered!"

If the desperado had made an attempt to have drawn a weapon, he would have been a dead man in a moment, for the miner had thrust the muzzle of a revolver to within a foot of his temple.

"Yes, Jim Darnley! You and your gang held up that coach, and, what's more, not being satisfied with just robbing the passengers, you carried off a young woman to your den in the mountains. Now, mates, that woman is my daughter, and I'm here to compel this wretch to release her, and then see that he is made to pay the penalty of his many crimes."

"Darnley!" continued Henderson, again addressing the robber, "your hours of life are few, and the moments are speeding rapidly by. Unbuckle that belt of weapons about your waist, and let them drop. Then right about face and lead us to where you have confined your captive."

With an oath the bandit obeyed, for he saw no particle of sympathy in the stern faces of the men by whom he was surrounded.

"As I said a minute ago," remarked Darnley, "that when a man has got a gun pointed at you, you'd better come pretty near doing what he tells you to, so, you old 'cradle-rocker,' I obey orders. Come on, I'll turn the young woman over to you in short order, but I'll tell you on the 'straight,' that I wouldn't have bothered with her at all if I hadn't thought by her looks she had some rich folks in the East who'd be willing to come down handsome to get her out of my clutches."

The procession which wended its way up the mountain grew larger and larger, swelling its numbers by reinforcements from the miners, who dropped pick, pan, and spade to witness the release of their comrade's daughter and assist in the punishment which they felt sure would be meted out to the robber chieftain.

They climbed a steep trail nearly to the crest of one of the mountain-spurs, when Darnley halted and said:

"Within five hundred yards of here I have half-a-dozen men well-armed, who won't hesitate to shoot if they see me in this company. Now, if some of you fellows don't want to lay down to rest with an ounce or two of lead in your bodies you'd better let me go on ahead and arrange for your reception."

A derisive laugh followed this suggestion, but it was quickly checked by Henderson, who said:

"Mates, Jim is right! He and I will go on alone."

"Do you mean it, man?" asked the robber, looking with astonishment at the miner.

"Certainly, otherwise I should not have said so. But, mind you, Darnley, upon your treatment of me and my child depends your life and those of your band. Act square for once, and you may be allowed a chance to repent."

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"All right, old man," answered Darnley; "I know I've got a pretty bad record among you fellows, but seeing that you are willing to trust me, you can depend upon it I'll act square! Have no fear, boys," he continued, addressing the miners: "your friend will come back inside of half an hour, none the worse for having travelled a quarter of a mile in the company of Jim Darnley, the road-agent."

Without hesitation, Tom Henderson followed the robber chief up the trail, leaving the group of miners wrapped in astonishment at his temerity. Nor had their wonder ceased when they heard him returning, and as he rounded a bend in the narrow path, they were elated to see that their bold companion was leading a young woman by the hand.

"Mates," began Tom, "this is my daughter, but she didn't expect to find a father up here in the mountains. I'll tell it all to you later on, if you'll come down to the cabin, for there is a person there the 'little one' is most anxious to see."

"Where is Darnley and his gang?" asked one of the group.

"They are making tracks down the other side of the mountain, and if they keep on going at the rate I saw them start, they'll be a great many miles away from here by sundown."

"What! Did you let 'em off?"

"That's just it, my friend," answered Tom. "They deserved hanging, every one of 'em, but it wasn't for us to place nooses round their necks. Two wrongs never make a right. Come to the cabin later on, and we will talk it all over." So saying the sturdy miner led his daughter away to place her in the arms of her wounded husband.

* * * * *

It was a joyful day in Tom Henderson's rough cabin. Joyful, yet that joy was mingled with sorrow, for the father, looking upon his children, could not help recalling the days when he was blessed with the presence of a true and noble wife, and master of a cosy, comfortable home.

"It is kind of strange," remarked Margaret, "that you should have picked up that locket."

"Yes, but not so strange as it is that we should meet in this way. What causes your trip here to the mines?"

"Nothing, but recreation, a journey for pleasure—but I am afraid that the rough experience through which we have passed will cause us to return home as soon as possible. And when we do, sir," went on the young husband, grasping the hand of the miner, "you must accompany us. I am possessed of sufficient of this world's goods to place us all beyond want."

"I, too, have been fairly prosperous," replied Tom. "I have stored away beneath that hearth-stone gold enough to make us all rich, but God knows when I was gathering it I never supposed that I should have the pleasure of sharing it with my daughter Margaret."

MARLTON DOWNING.

A HEARTLESS LITTLE MAID.

"Beware, young man, she is fooling thee;
Beware, O, take care."

"No, I can never marry a man who smokes. The smell is so horrid; and, besides, I must be first in my husband's affections. I must have no rivals in the shape of dirty old pipes and ragged tobacco pouches."

"You shall have no rivals, Miss Fortesque. You can have none. You are more perfect than any pipe. Not even the little one I bought last year is for a moment to be compared——"

"No, I suppose not," she broke in, laughing mischievously; "at least, you say so now. But old sweethearts are dangerous, and men have returned to their old loves before now," and the blue eyes glanced merrily, and the little feet tapped the floor. I grew desperate.

"I will sacrifice anything you wish. I will, indeed. I will never smoke again. I will burn everything."

"Even the little pipe you bought last year?" she said, with a provoking smile.

I could have kissed or killed her at that moment.

"Even the little pipe I bought last year," I echoed sadly, and I think there must have been a tear in my eye. "I will place myself beyond the reach of all temptation. And then?"

"Then we will begin to think about it," she retorted, jumping up and moving towards the door.

"Think about it?" I said. "Do you realise what I am going to sacrifice? Can you promise no more?"

"I am afraid not. You see, I must prove you first. The spirit is often willing, but the flesh is weak."

"I will be strong," I cried; "and I may hope?"

"All men may hope. But you will be well watched, and one cigarette will shatter all your hopes. The house will now adjourn until the end of March, when we will reopen the debate. Good-bye; don't forget the little pipe," and she danced out of the room, turning round at the door to give me a mocking little bow and a smile that left me a raving maniac.

Slowly and sadly I went home and climbed up the stairs to my sanctum. I sat down in a comfortable chair and thought. There was a pipe on the table by my side; it was the little one she was so jealous of. The firelight fell on its glowing bowl, and I believe it winked at me. I took it up tenderly and stroked it. My eye wandered to the tobacco-jar. I reached out my hand and took the lid off. I filled the pipe, looking like a guilty thing. Then I went to the door and locked it and drew the curtains close over my window. I took a match and struck it, but I hesitated, and the match burnt my fingers and fell on the floor. I lit another, but again the voice of conscience whispered to me, and again I burnt my fingers! Then I swore loudly and hurled the pipe into a corner, and sent the match-box and tobacco jar after it.

My heart swelled with pride: I had conquered. A vast range of possibilities opened up before me. What

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might I do in the future with such a will of iron? I grew reckless, and began to revel in my new strength.

I rose and took a newspaper which I spread out on the table. Then I laid a box of cigars on it and two boxes of cigarettes; on the top of these one or two cigarette holders, and a dozen pipes of different sorts and sizes. After that I fetched the pipe from the corner and laid it reverently on the summit of the heap, "a sorrow's crown of sorrow"; over them all I softly poured the fragrant tobacco from my jar, and began to collect my pouches.

"They will smell," I murmured to myself; "but the sacrifice must be made complete."

Then I unlocked the door and drew back all the curtains and pulled up all the blinds. I was not going to hide my light under a bushel. I put myself in the direction of the fireplace, laid hold of the paper by its four corners, and shut my eyes. In a minute all would be over. I moved towards the fireplace, but, as I did so, a thought struck me, and I hesitated.

"Am I doing right? It will be a sinful waste. I will give all away to the poor. And then, ought not I to keep some of the things? That pouch my aunt worked for me? That pipe my brother gave me? The presents from various members of the family? No, it would hardly be quite right."

I hesitated and was lost.

There came a knock at the door, and Willoughby entered.

Willoughby is a great friend of mine—so far as any non-smoker can be a smoker's friend. I would not let him be a witness of my defeat. I put the newspaper and its contents hastily down on the table.

"What on earth are you doing, Johnson?" he cried.

"Oh, I'm just—just clearing up," I said, with an attempt at a smile. "The room gets in such an awful muddle, you know."

"Your tobacco looks as if you kept it on the floor," he said, flinging himself into a chair. "But I have something to talk to you about. We have always been great friends, but hitherto there has been one bar to the perfect communion of our souls. You smoke, I do not. At last that bar is going to be removed."

A cold sweat gathered on my forehead. He had guessed my intentions, or had Lil told him? She could not have been so mean as to publicly crow over her conquest! I feebly answered "Yes," with a mixture of assent and interrogation in my tone.

"Yes, old man," he said, rising and grasping my hand; "there is now nothing between us. I am going to—to smoke."

I looked at him in silent astonishment.

"Yes, old man, smoke. Why do you look so concerned? It is not very bad, is it?—I mean the beginning?"

I saw his enthusiasm die away as the reality rose before him.

"Oh, no!"

I replied in a tone that suggested a few survivors of the ordeal.

"You don't seem very glad," he said; "but I am going to let you teach me. What shall I start on? Quick, tell me. My courage is screwed up to the point. I can't wait a moment."

The fiend of malice entered my soul. If I were to suffer by seeing him smoke, and knowing that I must deny myself even a cigarette, he should suffer, too. I have some peculiarly rank cigars that I keep for my enemies. I gave him one.

He lit it, and pulled at it vigorously, talking the while to keep his courage up.

"Why don't you smoke, old man?" he said jovially. "I thought you could never resist the smell. Come, light up."

"I am going to give it up for a time—Lent, you know. Must give up something. Doctor's orders, too. Bad for the heart. Waste of money. Think of so many poor people who want for bread."

"What?" he cried; and he began to jeer at my infidelity.

I reviled him under my breath; but as he grew paler and ceased to chatter, I thought I was revenged, and even began to pity him.

At last he let the cigar out, and grew very thoughtful. I poured him out something to drink, and we both imbibed steadily for two hours. I, to drown sorrow and regret, and he to keep himself alive.

Then we both grew more cheery and communicative. He told me he thought he would never repeat such an experience, but did not see how to avoid it. Fact was, he said, he had promised some one—had promised a lady—to smoke. She had said she would not marry a man unless he smoked. Besides, smoking destroyed germs.

Confidence begets confidence, and told I him my story with tears in my eyes.

"I cannot do it," I cried.

"I don't think I can, either," he moaned. "But I must, or she will not marry me. How I wish we could exchange! You are in luck. What an excellent wife yours will make you! So considerate of your health, so thoughtful for the poor!"

"You are in luck indeed. She must be a sweet girl. So sensible. She's quite right about germs. Exchange is no robbery. Let's exchange. We will introduce each other. The rest will be only a question of time."

"It's a bargain!"

"I have perfect faith in your taste, but who is she?"

"I think you have met her. Lilian Fortescue. What on earth's the matter?"

I had sworn a loud oath at the mention of the name, and crushed a cigarette box to pieces with my fist.

"What's the matter," I cried. "Why, you fool, there's no need for any exchange. We have both been fooled by the same girl."

For a few minutes neither of us spoke, but Willoughby hurled a fresh cigar I had given him into the grate, and my hand slowly stole towards the little pipe I bought last year. It was still filled. I lit it, and after a few puffs, burst into laughter.

"Little fiend!" I cried. "She said the smell was so horrid, and she would have no rival in a dirty old pipe."

"She said it was so good for a man," he continued; "kept him quiet and out of mischief and always made him sociable."

"I suppose she wanted neither of us, and set us impossible tasks to win her."

Next morning we concocted the following note, and sent it round to her:

Dear Miss Fortescue,—We, the undersigned, finding it impossible to fulfil the tasks you have set us, have agreed to undertake one another's burdens, and so accomplish all that you desire.

Your obedient slaves,

JOHN WILLOUGHBY.
WILLIAM JOHNSON.
HAROLD DOMBY.

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By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

MARRIED.

MRS. ALADROS was reading a novel. She did not look up as her husband entered.

"Well, Meresia," he said, "got through the great work?" She laid down the book, and turned to Alfonso.

"It is really very clever," she said; "I don't wonder it has made a sensation. There is so much quiet force and vigour in the writing. You did not know you were harbouring a genius. I suppose Mr. Serano will make a fortune out of this humble looking volume."

She pointed to the dull green cover, lacking any sign of ornamentation.

"He has made plenty of money already through his pen, but he never told me. I suppose he's the sort of beggar that can put his hand to anything, and have the wit to do it well. The strange thing is, he has no literary ambition whatever. To make a name as a writer holds no attraction for him. He is crazy about doctoring people, and his book shows remarkable knowledge of medical science. It appears he has studied, and now is starting a practice in town. He is a great loss to me. As a secretary I had absolutely no fault to find with him. But one can't expect a fellow with Serano's brains to stick long at that sort of work."

"No, and now he is bound to set on. His lucky star is in the ascendant!" said Meresia. "Nothing succeeds like success. I am very glad, for his past was a sad one. Bertie told me only the other day how bravely he bore his loss of fortune, and what a trial it was to him going back to his humble home and forgotten parents. He hated that year in Madrid. The monotony of a gaoler's life—to a man of his spirit, with artistic feeling—must have been purgatory."

"So Haydon knew Serano before?"

"Yes, they are old schoolfellows; he and Bertie were at Eton together."

"What does Haydon think of him? Has he read the book?"

"Rather!" replied Meresia. "Bertie is most enthusiastic about the new lion! He says that even as a boy Mr. Serano had that quickness and resolve which so often enables him to carry through an enterprise that no one else would attempt; yet hurry is the last word one would associate with his actions. It is more a cool promptness of action, an implicit faith in himself."

"He owes me a debt of gratitude," said Aladros, "for bringing him back to England."

"I always feel as if Mr. Serano were our property," laughed Meresia. "You really get a little reflected glory, Alfonso. The story of the gaoler and the valet seems to have leaked out, and enhanced his triumphs. All sorts of romances hover round the name of José Serano. Some people say he has been imprisoned as an Anarchist, and that you proved his innocence, got him out of gaol, and set him on his feet again. Others tell me he was a waiter at the Savoy, a footman, a crossing-sweeper, and a scene-shifter. Some believe him to be the son of a Spanish nobleman, and that good, respectable little lady, Miss Betts, who called herself his aunt. By-the-way, you know those Merrimans we met in the summer, they were relations of hers. Mr. Serano hardly ever visits them. They were not very nice when he was poor, yet Gregory Merriman is a good deal with him, somewhat to his mother's consternation, who believes that all authors are morally irredeemable."

"You are full of information," said Aladros, amused at Meresia's talk. "What else do people say?"

"That I am the heroine of José Serano's book."

Her husband's heavy brow contracted as she spoke.

"How do you know all this?"

"Oh! Elizabeth repeats a good deal."

"Elizabeth is here too much, gossiping," he replied. "She is so observant, always studying her fellows aggressively, and tattling."

"But it is not an unkind scrutiny, and she only repeats what is amusing. Elizabeth does me good, I like her social nature—her quickness to make friends. She is always willing to extend her circle of acquaintances when it includes interesting people, and the lucky ones who come under the category of those worth knowing. I can't imagine London without Elizabeth."

"She is too self-reliant for a woman," said Aladros.

"Your ideas of women are quite dreadful, you would like them to be all submissive and humble like me. The fact is,

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though Elizabeth pretends to be absolutely indifferent to public opinion, she is extremely anxious to be liked and appreciated. She knows you are not her friend, and I sometimes think it annoys her, and makes her shock your prejudices out of revenge. She has not been here for three days."

"I offended her last time."

"My dear Alfonso, that is not the reason. Elizabeth was very ill, nerves and all sorts of other ailments. I feel quite anxious about her. She has had to give up hunting, and is under a London doctor, who is doing her no good."

Aladros was standing at the window, his large frame seemed to block the wintry sunshine.

"Miss James is not exactly dying," he replied.

"No, I suppose not; but I should like to know what she is doing."

"Then I'll tell you. At this moment she is stepping out of a hansom, looking the very picture of health, and ringing at our bell with the strength of an Amazon. She has taken a strong tonic since we saw her last."

"You are not going?" cried Meresia, as Aladros moved towards the door.

"Yes. You need not say that I am in."

She greeted her friend joyfully. "Why, Elizabeth," she cried, "how well you look!"

"Isn't it wonderful? I am a resurrection, my dear! That stupid doctor was treating me quite wrongly, and every day I felt myself getting worse. I took your advice, and went to see Dr. Serano. He knew exactly what was the matter, hit the right nail on the head, cured my insomnia, gave me back my complexion, and here I am, a walking advertisement for your doctor-author. I'll make his fortune for him by recommending him to all my friends. But I suppose he has made that already through his wonderful book. I am quite sorry he is not English. I've asked him to one of our dinners next week; his personality is most fascinating, so different to the usual run of——"

Elizabeth checked herself. "Spaniards," said Meresia, smiling. "You nearly made an awkward slip, but I know you don't like foreigners, nor do I, though I married one. People often marry the thing they most dislike. Mrs. May, who has been married three times, always, as a girl, had a great prejudice against widowers, clergymen, and people with red hair. She was the second wife of her first husband; the next was a dean; and the third, who still survives, has a Paderewski crop that is positively scarlet!"

"Don't tell me these painful things, Meresia, or you will give me a relapse. I want to hear about yourself."

"There is nothing much to hear. I am not wildly elated with the joys of matrimony, nor am I the sorrow-seeking problem nurturer of book fame, who a few months after marriage keeps a consoler of the opposite sex in constant attendance. I just jog along naturally, and now that I am always with Alfonso, I do not find him particularly terrifying. I don't quarrel, because I confess I am a little afraid. He can be so alarmingly important, so crushingly dreadful, and so satirically blood-curdling if I disagree. I suppose in a way he has sapped my individuality, just as you prophesied. He imbues me with his theories and ideas, till they actually become my own. I adopt them against my better judgment. You don't know how many shoots have sprouted since we settled down.

"He still talks as if the great crimes were little, and the small ones immense. Political errors are unpardonable, murder is permissible under many circumstances. For instance, if we were beyond the pale of civilisation, and I were displeasing to him, he would remove me as a matter of course. Alfonso has never committed a murder because he respects the law; or else from a moral point of view there are numbers of tiresome people he would gladly put out of the way. I often wish he would not talk like that to me, it undermines my intellectual powers, turns sense and reason topsy turvy. I'm afraid I have not a very strong head; things prey on me so."

"You are not as young in heart as in years, Meresia, or you would not notice his talk. But everything is taken seriously, and you are too ready to meet your husband halfway, to drink in all he tells you, when a little laughter would show him and you the folly of it. Alfonso is a morbid man. Don't enter into his imaginativeness, or you will get no peace of mind. But here am I, an unmarried woman, giving advice! How you must be laughing at me in your sleeve!"

"Indeed, I am not, Elizabeth. What you say is very much to the point, singularly true. Do you think I have altered since I married?"

"A little, perhaps! You are more of a woman; but I still treat you as the little girl in the white and clover dress, who got engaged under my chaperonage. You were not so well known then, and you did not live in town. Now your dresses are chronicled in the Society papers, and the green eyes, and the golden voice, each get their share of printed approbation. It is worth living—is it not—to be the rage, if only for one season?"

"As cynical as ever!" laughed Meresia. "Do not mock an old friend. Besides, you know, I don't live for Society. It is a very nice, etcetera—a sweet after more wholesome fare; but one would not like a dinner all of confectionery."

"That is why you puzzle people. You have mastered the art of moderation. No one really likes a perpetual round of sweets. People get horribly tired, but they will not own it. So the pleasure routine goes on, till it is a drag and a labour; only there are so few Meresias to find this out and tell the world. I wonder if, some day, moderation will desert you. I shall be sorry, for it is always edifying to have an example!"

"I am not the least moderate in some things. The other day I saw a man ill-treating a horse. I had him prosecuted, and he was put in prison. It was a great nuisance, and I have to keep his wife and children while he is there, for they are very poor. People called me a fool, but I cannot endure cruelty. I would much rather the man had picked my pocket, or broken into my house; I could have forgiven that!"

"You are a strange contradiction, Meresia; one never knows how things are going to take you. You will be swept along by the tide of circumstances, but you won't reach the shore till you have done a good many foolish things, and some wise ones."

Elizabeth got up to go, and fastened her furs as she smiled on Mrs. Aladros.

"Good-bye, dear, and thank you for recommending that clever Dr. Serano."

Meresia went to the window and watched Elizabeth drive away. The faint sunshine had gone, and a silvery mist crept over the houses. The leafless trees in the square looked gaunt and sorrowful as they stretched their unclothed arms to a colourless sky.

Some of the autumn's dead leaves rustled busily down the paths, hustled by vagrant breezes, as if racing the wind.

The whole wore an air of calm, for the leaves settled in a heap under a wheelbarrow, and nothing stirred in the street below. Meresia's face caught the reflected peace. Her eyes half closed—she was thinking.

"I wonder," she said, "why I so dreaded marriage with Alfonso. I must have known of something, something that has not happened yet."

Someone entered the half dark room and shadowed her.

"Wrapt in abstraction," he said, and she saw it was her husband.

"Yes, a mere ideality, of no practical use."

"Everything is abstraction," he continued, speaking in slow meditative tones.

"Even man?" she asked.

"Man is a genus," he replied, "but may be raised to the genus animal, thence to organised being, thence to created being, thence to matter in the abstract, and so on—till——"

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"Oh, don't!" cried Meresia, "that sounds so dreadfully complicated."

"Things must be absolutely empty, or absolutely complicated, but I don't think it matters which. Shall we ring for tea?"

"Yes," said Meresia.

And Aladros rang, while she changed the gloom into the warm shaded light of incandescent gas.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANARCHISM.

A FOOTMAN placed a pile of papers on a table—daily papers, society journals, magazines—for Meresia was a great reader. Many of her ideas on life and her fellow-creatures were formed from the literature of the day. Consequently she held human nature in no very high esteem.

She took up the *Daily Debater*, and glanced at the headings of the articles.

"Spanish Anarchists" caught her eye. "Extraordinary statements of how they are treated."

The subject excited her interest, and she settled down to read the information, but she was not prepared for the shocking stories alleged to have taken place in a Madrid prison, with the knowledge and consent of the Spanish authorities. The incidents, told in the simplest language as true, turned Meresia hot and cold, with burning faintness and frozen horror, as she read. The writer was, he stated, leading a campaign of indignation organised by the Anarchist communists of London, in reference to the atrocities practised upon their brethren in Spain. His identity was not divulged, but as Meresia scanned the lines in voiceless wonder, she traced the familiar hand of José Serano.

She followed the details as if in the throes of a nightmare, not realising the tortures, yet shuddering involuntarily.

"Compressing the head, belabouring the flesh on throat and temples, inflicting the gag, flogging, keeping the prisoners running on foot without granting them sleep, food, or drink." Such were the things her mind feebly followed, and halted at the sickening account of redhot irons applied to the flesh.

"It can't be true!" she cried, crushing the paper in her hand; "it is a vile libel. Alfonso will know; Alfonso will tell me!"

The word "judge" caught her eye lower on the page, and compelled her to read further. Her face had grown absolutely colourless, she went slowly with faltering footsteps to her husband's room.

He was writing letters, and looked up as she entered with a smile, holding out his huge hand, which Meresia did not take.

"Have you read this, Alfonso?" pointing to the column in the *Daily Debater*.

"No."

"Is it true," she asked, "that a man would be kept in a Spanish prison eight days without eating or sleeping, with a gag applied to him, his nails cut off, and his body bruised with blows?"

"What manner of man?" asked Aladros.

"A man who could not even speak Spanish, accused of being an Anarchist, one who on being brought to the judge asked for an interpreter. The military judge shrugged his shoulders, made a sign, and the man was dragged back to his dungeon. Alfonso, you—you are a military judge, tell me, for goodness' sake, you had nothing to do with all this fiendish injustice."

A pause.

"And if they did take him back?" said Aladros, "you don't know what followed."

"Yes, it is here, in all its hideous detail. They chained him to a wall, where the hangmen, the private gendarmes, could kick and insult him. They were allowed to put a wooden cylinder in his mouth, made like a horse's bridle, and fastened by strings behind his neck. Then these wretches whipped him along, and promised him something worse."

She caught her breath, waiting for Aladros to speak.

"Anything more?"

"Finally he lost his reason from sufferings and torture. But there are many other cases equally revolting. One of the victims was tortured into accusing other innocent prisoners; he knew his accusations were false, but he was helpless, for they burnt him with irons and made him speak! Oh! tell me you know nothing of all this—that it is a series of shameful lies!"

"I don't see that it matters to you, Meresia, one way or the other."

"Not matter to me! When you are my husband?"

"It is not a woman's business, and it served the felons right. They merely got what they deserved. I have seen worse things than what you tell me."

He smiled—his hard, cruel, merciless smile—and turned again to his letters, dismissing the subject.

Meresia stood watching him—the paper still in her hand—an awful loathing crept over her, a giddy sensation came in her head, and a choking in her throat. She felt an overwhelming desire to strike him, only the idea was so absolutely absurd.

She pictured the scenes vividly to herself, and in each the pitiless scorn of Alfonso Aladros played a prominent part.

"Why are you waiting?" asked her husband.

"I thought perhaps you might have something to say, some explanation or excuse. Don't you want to read the article? I expected you would answer and contradict it, but that is impossible—now——"

"It does not interest me," he replied. "My name is not mentioned, I suppose?"

"Then *you* were the judge?" said Meresia. "Were you in court when some of the gendarmes even left the hall exclaiming: 'Assassins! assassins!' and when the examining magistrate opened a door by striking it with his foot, and pushed the prisoner out of sight? After that, immediately the hangman got hold of him, and took him to an upper room, from whence—a few moments later—came loud screams of agony. The judge called for another prisoner to be brought into court, that the *conseil* might pay no attention to what had just passed."

"Really, Meresia, you tire and disturb me! I came to England to rest and forget the duties and responsibilities of my position. I know all this, it is not news to me, nor is it my fault that it has got into the hands of the English press. I have always done my best for the Spanish Government, and one cannot let these dogs of Anarchists treat us like children. We must serve them as they would serve us, without pity or consideration. Your methods are different in England—less severe, less final. I remember the case you speak of perfectly, so now I hope your curiosity is satisfied, and that you will let the subject drop."

"But it is too horribly inhuman to imagine!" she gasped. "Can't you see what it is to me?—to learn that you——"

But she broke off sharply, unable to control her voice, which in its shocked scorn and painful trembling sounded sweeter than ever to Aladros. He was suddenly aware that Meresia felt upset at what she had read.

"Why, my poor little darling, how pale you look!" he said, pushing back his chair and raising his cumbrous body to its full height. He drew her towards him, but she pulled away, and shrank back, consumed by horror at his touch.

"Your hands are red with blood," she said. "You are worse than a murderer!"

Alfonso laughed aloud.

"I do believe you are almost angry with me," he said. "One would think you were in sympathy with these blackguards we have been unnecessarily discussing."

"Of course I am in sympathy with anyone who has

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suffered such vile treatment!" retorted Meresia with blazing eyes. "Who would not be?"

"England is so lenient, and it is all what you are accustomed to. We won't discuss it any more, if it troubles you. But these things are not worth bothering about. Just banish them from your mind."

His coolness staggered Meresia. She was maddened by the thought of his cruelty, and disgusted at his utter lack of feeling.

Mere contact with him, the fact of breathing the same atmosphere, seemed stifling her. She threw open the door with a defiant gesture, and left the room.

Aladros shrugged his great square shoulders, and returned to his writing. Meresia's attitude amused rather than annoyed him, for he could not realise she was in earnest. It was a pose, a part, pretty and effective, if a little tiresome. She was such a child, and her views were in his eyes so utterly grotesque and ridiculous.

To fuss over people she had never seen—criminals, who were rewarded according to their works! What could their sufferings be to her? Surely he knew what was right and just without Meresia's interference. It appeared surprisingly funny and audacious to Aladros, who suffered his actions to be criticised by none.

Could he have seen into his wife's heart and read the secrets there, it might have stirred even the iron nerves of an Aladros to something of shame or remorse.

Instead he dismissed the whole incident lightly from his mind, and lit a cigar, before continuing his letters.

Meresia's moderation deserted her as she flew upstairs. Her mind was racked with a tormenting conflict. She had felt absolutely convinced that her husband was innocent of those frightful charges. But not only had he acknowledged himself guilty, but shown his contempt for her sympathy, her horror, as if she had been a silly child, of no account. She was bitter against him to a degree; her loathing and hatred took shape and substance; it seemed to transform her from a young and lovable woman to an excitable she-fiend. Her breathing was the quick, sharp panting of one labouring under rage and pain. She knew now what the promptings of her instinct had foretold. The cruelty of the man to whom she had given herself made all that was good in Meresia tremble and shrink, though at the time she was in ignorance of the cause.

She had noticed, since their wedding, that José Serano, in spite of her husband's kindness, endured Alfonso politely, but despised him in his heart. She often wondered at the coldness of the younger man, to whom Aladros was sincerely attached. Once she mentioned this to her husband.

"Poor José can never forget he has been my valet," Alfonso told her; "the barrier is broken, but the remains are always lying in his way. He stumbles against them, and they remind him of the old position."

To-day, as Meresia paced the corridors, feverishly the truth formed itself, like the coloured pieces of a kaleidescope, into a whole, and the picture was far from pleasant.

José had used her husband as a means of reaching England, where he had been educated with all an Englishman's horror of brutality and torture. He knew the secrets of the gaol, and they had made him bitter and revengeful. No wonder he burnt to expose the crimes of injustice.

She must see José and question him herself.

Meresia's blood was up—she would have stopped at nothing—her indignation knew no bounds, and her heart burnt within her. If Serano hated his master, his hatred could not have been greater than the wife's for the husband. She ordered the carriage, and put on her furs; they were particularly becoming to Meresia.

Aladros heard her hurrying down stairs, but he did not trouble to inquire where she was going. Only when the brougham had driven away he wondered why she had not asked him to accompany her.

"Perhaps, after all, she was really rather cross over that article," he said. "Who the devil could have written it? Not Serano, I'd take my oath! A Spaniard never reviles his own countrymen; besides, he is too busy with his patients to give a thought to the grievances of Anarchist Communists! He may have talked imprudently in journalistic circles, and some sensation seeker gathered the fragments together with judicious pumping, in the hopes of making a scandal."

In the meanwhile Meresia, whose first rage had subsided into morbid and bitter meditation, reached the doctor's house, to find he was engaged.

"I'll wait," she said. "Say I *must* see him. I am not a patient."

She was shown into a private room, and left to the chaos of her own thoughts and the monotonous ticking of a large clock, supported by bronze devils with grinning faces.

Meresia turned her back on these sinister figures, and thought of Aladros.

"What was Hell?" she wondered, "with its thousand representations, its disputed existence, its pictured spirits of evil, malice, and uncleanness. Surely those infernal regions, vaguely imagined by some, must be a home for the tyrants and oppressors—the cruel, bloodthirsty men, like Alfonso Aladros."

Her gloomy reflections occupied a full hour before the door opened, and José Serano stood in her presence.

Meresia rose, pale and beautiful in her heavy furs, which, being loosened, slipped away from her figure, and left her unfettered to battle for the truth.

She held out her hand to José, and he noticed that it trembled.

"What is the matter?" he asked, in his quiet, kindly voice.

The green eyes were raised to his, full of a new indescribable misery. Meresia tried to speak, but her voice failed, and for answer she drew the article from her pocket and spread it on the table.

(To be continued.)

KEY TO THE PICTURE PUZZLE In "P.W." Extra Xmas Number.

20	102	61	21	12	32	42	37	86	59	50	55	34
36	100	38	81	69	105	73	40	77	57	107	95	67
97	9	3	53	101	72	7	87	19	27	23	46	15
106	64	93	11	22	5	26	43	70	116	17	89	112
117	33	49	78	114	113	98	66	90	80	110	41	25
104	94	108	76	115	96	4	99	8	48	1	68	52
75	111	30	14	24	6	84	62	44	79	10	45	92
28	85	51	91	88	71	60	13	56	29	65	82	31
2	58	35	54	63	47	18	74	83	103	109	39	16

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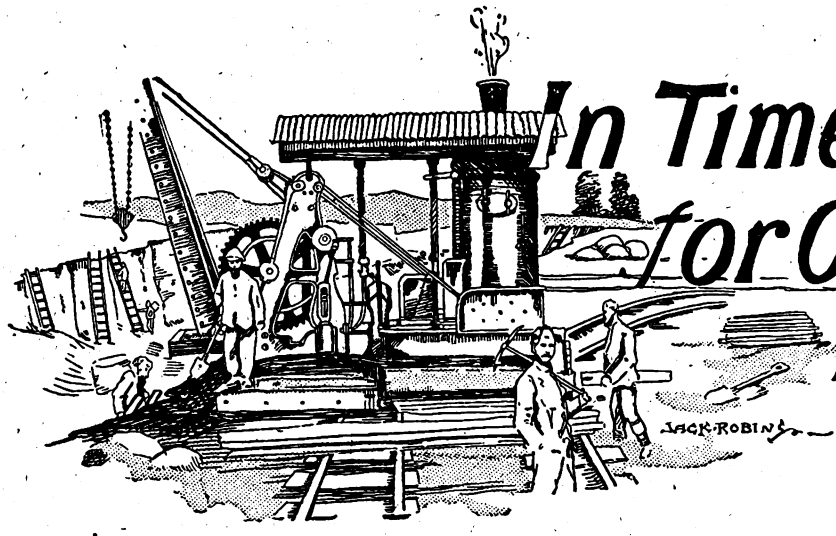
Picture Solution will be Found on Page 13.



In Time for Once in his Life

THE fierce midday sun was pouring down in full force upon the barren, sandy district in which one of the greatest triumphs of modern engineering, the Baltic Canal, was in process of construction. The men had just knocked off work for their dinner, and some were taking advantage of the meagre, indifferently cooked food sold in the canteen, while others, notably the Italians, were preparing their own meal. The dark-eyed sons of southern Europe, with their gaily coloured head-gear and picturesque appearance, formed a bright spot in the monotonous scene. As they cooked their macaroni they talked and gesticulated in the vivacious and excited manner usual to them, but which gave them an appearance of quarrelling among themselves to the more phlegmatic Germans, who plodded silently through their dinner or smoked the pipe of peace as a digestive

A tall, stalwart Holsteiner, with honest blue eyes and a frank, open countenance that told of no past other than that of a healthy, uneventful youth, and a square jaw beneath a firm. resolute mouth, that gave fair promise of success in whatever he might undertake, was climbing up one of the ladders that led from the deep cutting.

His thoughts were evidently pleasant ones, and had brought a smile to his lips. When he reached the top he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked towards the road which led from the works to the few houses in the neighbourhood. Over the chaos of sand-heaps, stones and machinery, he saw a sight which made his heart beat quicker, and a soft light come into his eyes.

A small figure was walking quickly along, and he knew every turn and bend of the girl's head, every movement of her arm as she swung the empty basket at her side. It was Doris, the innkeeper's daughter, who had been to take the chief engineer his dinner to the red house on the hill.

Now she was on her way home, and Wilm Lorensen made up his mind to forego his dinner, if need be, so that he might accompany her.

But the pleasure quickly faded from his face, for there, a few yards from him, was the Italian, Peretti, scrambling up the bank with all speed, fired no doubt by the same intention as himself.

Wilm Lorensen set his teeth and determined to forestall him. He hated Peretti, for his smooth tongue and soft voice found favour with the women, and of late, Doris had seemed only too willing to listen to the wonderful tales he could tell of his sunny home and the gay, careless lives led by his countrywomen. Lorensen was a man of few words himself, but in his heart he had long made up his mind that Doris was to be the sunshine of the little homestead where they would settle down later on and live as their fathers had done before them.

He started off, and on his way noticed a third pair of eyes fixed on the girl he loved, and those belonged to his countryman, Peter Svensen, a slow-blooded, sleepy fellow, the butt of his comrades, who contented himself with looking, and made no attempt to follow her.

The nimble Peretti was first; but Lorensen, nothing daunted, resolved that if he couldn't have her to himself he would not leave her with that grinning Italian.

"Good-day, Miss Doris, may I walk a little way with you? I am going to Holtenau."

"Eh, mate," sneered Peretti, "where are your eyes? The young lady has an escort already. You go your own way and don't try to spoil sport."

"If Doris herself tells me to go, I will, but not unless," doggedly returned the German.

The girl was twirling a marigold between her white teeth, and looked roguishly from one admirer to the other, and then said:

"As far as I know the road is open to all that like to make use of it."

"Yes, of course," agreed Lorensen, gruffly adding, "more's the pity," with a look at his rival.

"*Caramba!*" said the Italian scornfully. "He is a German boor! Peretti will not quarrel before a lady. Ah! if you were only to see our beautiful, sunny land you would never wish yourself back in this desert!"

"I should dearly like to see it, Peretti, but I think it would be too hot for me there."

"Sunshine, sunshine every day, and dancing in the moonlight by night!" he went on ecstatically. "To see the girls with their corals, their scarfs and their castanets! Necklaces, bracelets, and rings of coral!"

"I think coral is very pretty," said Doris. "I saw a lot at the Kiel fair last year."

"One of our snug northern homes is better than all your coral and finery," put in Lorensen.

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"Oh, yes, snowed up for half the year!" laughed the Italian. "The blue sky is our roof-tree and our curtains are the branches of camelias and olives."

"Shut up!" said Wilm crossly. "I'd rather have a blade of yonder coarse grass than all your olives and camelias!"

Doris objected to this contempt for the beautiful flowers she had so seldom seen, and that only made her lover more quarrelsome.

"I don't know why you Italians don't stop in your beautiful, sunny land," he grunted.

"But there is one thing in which you Germans excel us," continued the irrepressible Peretti, "and that is, your women! Their hair is like the ripe corn, their eyes like the skies above, and their smile as peaceful as the moonlight. Our women are too fierce, too restless, too wild! I adore German women!"

Lorensen now began to whistle loudly, but the Italian was not to be driven from the field, he only remarked blandly:

"Comrade, look here, if my talk wearies you, you needn't stop to hear it. The road is open and the young lady and I can get on very well without you. Can't we?" he added, turning to Doris.

"Lorensen wants to see my father, I expect," replied the girl, "so it would be foolish to turn back now we are so nearly there. The way has seemed very short to-day. Good-bye," she said smiling at Peretti, "and as you have told me such pretty stories, you may have that," taking the marigold from her lips, "I have nothing better to offer you. Camelias and myrtle don't grow in our poor soil here."

They had reached the little inn which stood close to the new canal cutting, and, having taken leave of Peretti, who went away kissing the flower and murmuring his ecstasies in his musical mother-tongue, the other two passed through the house into the garden where stood three tall elm trees close together, and under whose shade were rude benches and wooden tables, where the host, an old sea-captain, did a thriving trade among the workmen and engineers.

Lorensen's mood was a stormy one, and he could not find words to express his disgust at the girl's conduct.

"Don't you want to see father?" she asked, after a pause.

"No. I'm off."

"Off? Where?"

"Away from you, you shameless flirt!" and he made a move as if he were going; but she followed him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Why are you so cross, Lorensen? Just because I let that fellow chatter to me?"

"Because you like that black devil! Anyone can see it by the way you look at him. Well, there are plenty of other girls, that's one thing!"

Doris looked at him and shook her head, saying:

"Lorensen, you are really too silly."

"Yes, but I'm not blind, I watched you all the way, and then you gave him your flower! You—you——" he stopped short, choking.

"And why did I do all that?" she asked, bravely going up to the enraged man. "Why? simply to protect you from the results of your foolish jealousy! You don't care how you insult Peretti, and father says Italians are dangerous people to offend."

"Oh, you needn't trouble yourself about me," he said sulkily.

"Then it doesn't matter if Peretti sticks a knife into you when your back is turned? That's what they do when they're angry."

"Oh, you can talk fast enough! Why you've turned poor Svensen's head with your false ways."

Doris laughed outright. "Well I never! Fancy you being jealous of poor Svensen!"

"You lead every man by the nose, you flirt!"

"I am good friends with all, if that's what you mean. You're very cross to-day. Good-bye, then."

He turned to go, and something in his face made her make one more attempt to pacify him.

"You know very well, Lorensen, that though I joke with all, I only love one." Her voice trembled a little and her blue eyes glistened as she said these words.

After a moment's struggle with his ill-temper, he turned penitently towards her, thoroughly ashamed of his conduct, and, taking both her hands in his, said:

"Doris, I'm only a plain fellow, I've no coral to offer you, nor pretty stories to amuse you with—but I did think that in a year or two—we, you and I——" he stopped and his eyes said the rest.

"Yes, Lorensen, and so did I. You know I don't care for all those things really."

"Then you will put up with me as I am, and you don't mind waiting a little while for me to make a home for you?"

"I want you just as you are, and I'd rather wait all my life for you than marry anyone else."

The remainder of the interview was of a description that need not interest outsiders, and a few minutes later Wilm Lorensen was making his way back to the works, with a light heart and swinging gait, for Doris was now his very own, and she had promised to meet him that night on her way from Friedrichsort, when they could enjoy their new-found happiness undisturbed.

There was no one to be seen on the dusty road, but crouching behind a sand heap was Peretti, and with murder in his eyes he watched Lorensen's happy face as it passed him. The Italian felt instinctively that his rival had stolen a march upon him, and with a curse he turned from him, and regained his place in the cutting.

When work was resumed Lorensen felt the want of his dinner, and, contrary to his custom, drank pretty freely from the flask that he carried at his side. As Svensen passed him wheeling a heavy barrow, a feeling of compunction prompted him to say:

"It's hot work; have a drink, Svensen?"

The latter was lost in thought, and at first did not understand what had been said to him; however, he refused the proffered drink, and went on his way, absent-mindedly, as was his wont. Suddenly he stopped and looked down into the cutting, measuring the distance as it were with one hand, and thereby endangering the safety both of his barrow and himself.

"Svensen, you blockhead, what are you doing?" shouted the overseer. "Look alive, man, we're waiting!" Then he added to himself: "That fellow gets lazier every day!"

"Oh, he's in love!" said a cheeky youth standing near. This remark was greeted with a roar of laughter and one asked:

"How do you know that?"

"Why, the man he lodges with told me that he brushes his hat every Saturday and sleeps with a book called 'Advice to Lovers' under his pillow."

Fresh peals of laughter were called forth by this conclusive evidence; but Lorensen looked after the clumsy retreating figure with a touch of sympathy and compunction. While he was in the act of cheering himself

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with another pull at his flask, a barrow struck him violently from the back and made him stagger on to the very brink of the cutting. With a great effort he righted himself, and, shouting angrily as he turned round: "Can't you look where you're going, you fool!" he saw that it was Peretti. Was it an accident? Doris's warning came back to him, and the horrible thought chained his tongue.

The others began to swear at the Italian for his clumsiness, but he burst forth fiercely:

"Why did he get in my way? It's his own fault, he should have moved."

"That's no reason for trying to kill a fellow," said the others.

"*Caramba!* Who've I killed? I must wheel my barrow, and whatever is in the way, be it man, wood, or stone, it must move or take its chance!" So saying he shook his fist at Lorensen and went off cursing under his breath.

Just then Svensen came up, saying anxiously:

"Oh, you're all right, Lorensen? I saw what he was up to and I wanted to come and warn you, but somehow I was too late."

As he stood there like a great shame-faced schoolboy, the others laughed again and said chaffingly:

"You should have come a bit sooner, old man; you couldn't expect Lorensen to hang over the side till you come to pull him up."

"No, I was too late, as usual. I don't know how it is, but I never am in time for anything. Perhaps I shall be some day."

"Then you must wake up, and especially when you go courting."

"So I will," he answered almost briskly. "That I will."

When tea-time came Svensen, instead of joining his companions, brushed himself up, washed his face and hands carefully, and started off to the inn at a most unusual pace. He was quite out of breath when he arrived, and not a little nervous when Doris came to ask him what he would have. When she brought the beer he had ordered, he timidly asked her to stay and keep him company while he drank it, as he had something to say.

"Well I can't stay long, for I have to go to Friedrichsort for my father this evening."

"What do you thing of me, Miss Doris?" he said at last, fidgetting on his chair.

"Of you, Mr. Svensen?"

"Yes, of me."

"Well, they all say that you are an honest, upright man, and I'm sure you are."

"Yes, Doris, I am honest. And now, if you'll listen, I'll tell you the truth."

In halting, broken sentences he told her his story—how his father had been lost at sea and his mother had never cared for him. His childhood and youth had been loveless and lonely, and at last he had taken his life into his own hands and found work on the canal. There he had first seen her, and with her had come the first real sunshine into his heart. She had never laughed at his awkward ways, and always had had a kind word for him when they met. If only she would accept his love he would work for her night and day, and hold up his head among his fellows.

"Dear Mr. Svensen——" she began.

"It has cost me a great deal to say this, Doris; but I can't rest till I've told you, for I love you as I never loved anything on earth. Don't laugh at me!"

"How could I laugh? You are doing me a great honour——"

"But—you won't?" he faltered, with a stricken look on his face.

"I should have been proud to be your wife, as any woman might be, but—but you've come too late, Svensen."

"Too late—too late, again!" he murmured hopelessly.

"Yes, I'd given my heart away before I ever saw you. Don't be angry with me! You don't know how it hurts me to say this——"

He rose quickly, shook himself, passed his hand over his eyes, and again repeating the fatal words: "Too late," turned away, saying gruffly: "Yes, yes, it's all right. I'd no business to come. Good-night," and without another word he was off. Doris gazed sadly after him, as he stumbled down the road, not seeming to see or care where he went.

He crawled away to a lonely part of the deep cutting and threw himself down behind a heap of stones, alone with his misery. One by one the busy sounds of the day were hushed. The sun was setting, but its rays did not penetrate to where he was. He felt stifled after a time, and an irresistible longing for the sea came upon him. He climbed up and made his way to the coast, where the waves were glowing in the sunset.

He threw himself down under the shade of some stunted bushes with a sense of relief. Who had come before him? was now his thought. Had Peretti won Doris's affections? He hoped not, for he knew him to be a bad man; yet he had often seen them together.

The time passed almost unperceived by him, and the moon rose, flooding sea and land with her soft light. For a while all was silent, then he heard footsteps, and saw Doris in the distance walking with a man whose arm was round her waist. Svensen's heart beat till he could hardly breathe as he eagerly sought to discern the face of his successful rival. Thank Heaven, it was not Peretti, but his own countryman, Wilm Lorensen! He could hear her merry laugh and the deep tones of her lover's voice as they came towards him. Suddenly, a dark figure rose some distance behind them, and appeared to be stealthily gaining upon the unconscious pair. Svensen's love for Doris made him keen to scent danger for her, and he felt something was wrong. They had a gate to pass through, and he realised that if he could get there before they did, the harm might be averted. For once he would be in time. Oh, if only he might be! With every nerve strained he ran silently behind a hedge, keeping his eyes on the dark figure that was making for the same goal as himself. Svensen was first, and as the figure came up he saw something bright flash in its hand.

He dragged the man out into the moonlight and recognised the features of Peretti. With iron hand he held the Italian in his grasp, but the bright blade descended on his breast and all was dark before his eyes. He had just time to shout hoarsely "Lorensen beware!" then there was a sound of rapidly retreating footsteps and all was silence.

He did not know how long it was before he opened his eyes to see the face dearest to him on earth bending over him, with tears of pity in her eyes.

He heard Lorensen's voice asking him questions, but he could only say the one word: "Peretti." Then he took their hands and tried to put them one in another, and with a final effort he raised himself a little:

"God bless you, my girl. It's best so. Thank God, I was in time for once!" And, with a happy smile, he died.

M. F.

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Story of a Potato, Three Young Persons, and an Old Musician.

Mdlle. Aglae, milliner, was in high spirits on a particular Sunday morning, at a time, too, when she was preparing potatoes for dinner. She sat at the open, sunny window, high up on the fifth floor, and looking out on the Rue Lepie, Paris. Quite by accident, one of the tubers slipped from her hand. It fell straight and heavy on the new silk hat of a passing gentleman, and the *chapeau* was staved in.

This gentleman had come direct from his hatter, and, of course, was furiously indignant at the disaster to his new and shining head-gear.

He looked upwards, and saw a window on the fifth floor hastily slammed down. He waited no longer for any further indications of the defaulter. Full of passion, he rushed up the stair, determined to inflict condign punishment on the villain who had knocked his hat into a shapeless mass.

A few springs, and he was at the second stair landing. At that very moment a door opened, and out popped a gentleman in such hot haste that he actually rushed into his arms. They stared at each other as if about to resort to more violent measures, when an exclamation burst simultaneously from both:

"Anatole!"

"Edgar!"

Anatole Baudruche and Edgar Bricheton were old college chums. They had never met since their student days—that is to say, for over twelve years. This mutual recognition had the effect of cooling their anger, and at once they entered into friendly conversation.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Edgar. "What is the matter with your hat?"

"Don't speak of it," replied Anatole. "A potato from a fifth floor window has played the very deuce with it."

"And you are going up to restore the potato? Well, that is generous."

"Not at all. I only wish to point out the consequences to the guilty individual, and endeavour, if possible, to obta in some recompense for the damage."

"Oh, as to that, you may save yourself the trouble," said Edgar.

"And why?" demanded the astonished Anatole.

"Why? Because Bidoche is a cantankerous old dog. He would close the door in your face before you could utter a word."

"Bidoche?"

"Yes, the one who dropped the potato. It could have been nlo other person. Everybody quarrels with him, the od wretch. and it is a general belief that he purposely makes himself disagreeable."

"You live here, then?"

"No, but my aunt has apartments, and she tells me that not a day passes but what she has a skirmish with Bidoche. Now, if you wish to have it out with the old curmudgeon, I will be delighted to accompany you. There is strength in union."

Anatole and Edgar mounted three more flats. They stopped before a door from which deep yet melodious sounds were issuing.

"Here you are," said Edgar. "The villain has got a bassoon now."

He gave a determined pull at the bell, and the bassoon suddenly ceased. They heard the clatter of his wooden shoes on the floor. Then the door was opened, and there appeared a little old man, with a pleasant, laughing countenance, holding the above-mentioned instrument in his hand.

"Well, gentlemen?" smilingly asked the little man.

"M. Bidoche, I presume?" said Edgar.

"Yes, the scoundrel Bidoche," added Anatole, shaking the deformed hat in one hand, and with the other thrusting the potato under the nose of the astonished musician.

"M. Bidoche?" said the little old man with courteous amazement. "I do not know him!"

"What!" exclaimed Edgar, "are you not Bidoche?"

"No," he answered with the most provoking good nature, "There must be some mistake, my name is Molesquin. I am solo bassoon in the orchestra of the Theatre des Gobelins, and I only moved into this house to-day."

"Oh, hang it!" exclaimed Edgar, "just to think that the old scoundrel has cleared off when we were about to chastise him for all the trouble he has caused!"

"Then," said Anatole in a more humiliated mood, "it was not you who threw this potato?"

"I never eat potatoes," replied the musician, still smiling; "I only partake of green vegetables. However, if you gentlemen care to enter my humble apartments, I will play you over my part in the *Tour de Nesle*. It contains some remarkable passages, which I am sure will do you good to hear."

Anatole and Edgar both felt they had some amends to make to the old gentleman, and considered this could be the best accomplished by accepting the cordial invitation. So into the house they walked, and when seated, the musician, delighted with their company, offered them cigarettes. The musician then took his position at the stand, and, grasping his instrument, at once began to execute the bassoon part of the *Tour de Nesle*.

As he grunted out the notes, Edgar at first could scarcely refrain from laughter at the comic incident, but gradually he assumed an appreciative countenance, and ultimately went nearly off to sleep. As for Anatole, seated as he was beside the open window, with the precious potato in his hand, he could not get his mind off the catastrophe to his hat. He paid little attention to the music. All at once, however, a loud false note from the bassoon caused him to start. At the same time the potato escaped from his hand, bounced out of the window, and fell from the height of five storeys.

* * * * *

Mdlle. Aglae was greatly alarmed at her carelessness in allowing the potato to fall. She hastily closed the window, so that in the event of an accident nobody could suspect her. Then she sat down, not without anxiety, to await developments.

Great was her fear as she heard the footsteps of two

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men rapidly ascending the stair. "It is the police," she thought. Her heart beat wildly and a cold sweat broke over her forehead. She imagined she was about to hear a loud knock at the door.

However, the noise of the footsteps ceased, and she heard the door-bell of her neighbour ringing. The door was opened, and after a few moments closed on the visitors, whoever they were.

Although she regained somewhat her serenity, she dared not yet stir. She feared that the guardians of the peace, having ascertained the innocence of her neighbour, would lose no time in calling her to account.

She hastened to conceal the basket of potatoes, which might have served to convict her, and then, in anticipation of the police, assumed a bold, defiant attitude. After waiting a few moments more, and hearing no other noise but that of the persistent bassoon, she now felt quite sure of her safety. Nevertheless, she desired to make assurance doubly sure. So she picked up her milk-can, slipped down-stairs on tip-toe, and walked straight to the dairy.

Mdlle. Aglae now felt she could at least establish an alibi. She purchased her milk, and, perfectly at ease, returned to her house, carefully guarding the contents of the pitcher. Suddenly she received a sudden shock. At the same time she was splashed with milk from head to foot. The potato which had slipped from the hand of Anatole fell with remarkable precision into the milk can.

"Murder!" cried Aglae. "What miscreants there are, to be sure." And she shot up the stairs, quite prepared to attack the first person she met. This person was Anatole.

* * * * *

Anatole was, of course, alarmed at the flight of the potato. He had no desire to listen longer to the bassoon, especially when he recollected the police regulations forbidding anything to be thrown from the windows. Up he rose and made a sign to Edgar, who, however, had fallen asleep. He rudely awakened him, and taking a hasty good-bye with the bassoon soloist, to whom they promised, out of politeness, to come at a future time and obtain lessons on the instrument, they made a rush for the door.

The moment the door opened Aglae was on the landing. Aglae and Anatole faced each other—Aglae with the milk streaming from her face and hair, Anatole with his *chapeau* sadly battered. A moment's consideration, and the situation was understood.

"Sir," exclaimed Aglae, "you are a wretch!"

"And you, madame, have fingers like putty," retorted Anatole.

"And you are most impertinent."

"And you are not so polite as I could wish. Let me give you this advice, madame, when one cannot peel a potato without letting it fall from a five storey window, one should never attempt to cook: one should dine at a restaurant."

"I have no lessons to receive from you, sir."

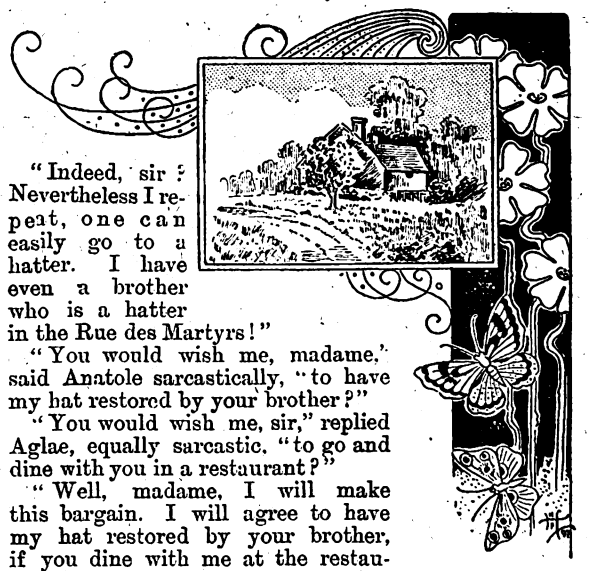
"Indeed, madame? Still I repeat it—one should dine at a restaurant. I even know a very good house on the Place Pigalle; yes, madame, I do."

"Very well, sir, just go there."

"A pretty spectacle indeed I would make at a restaurant with my hat battered out of all shape."

"Well, sir, when one's hat gets into that condition, one can easily go to a hatter."

"I have no lessons to receive from you on that score, madame!"



"Indeed, sir? Nevertheless I repeat, one can easily go to a hatter. I have even a brother who is a hatter in the Rue des Martyrs!"

"You would wish me, madame," said Anatole sarcastically, "to have my hat restored by your brother?"

"You would wish me, sir," replied Aglae, equally sarcastic, "to go and dine with you in a restaurant?"

"Well, madame, I will make this bargain. I will agree to have my hat restored by your brother, if you dine with me at the restaurant."

"Very well, sir, I will agree to dine with you at the restaurant if you have your hat restored by my brother."

"And I," put in Molesquin, who had as yet said nothing, but had been listening with astonishment. "I will pardon you for interrupting my dear studies on condition that you accept from me a box at the Theatre des Gobelins."

"We accept," cried Edgar, who by this prompt intervention cooled the ardour of the disputants, and turned the conversation into a milder channel. Molesquin withdrew to his house.

"In the first place, madame," said Anatole, "allow me to introduce you to my excellent friend Edgar Bricheton, my old fellow student."

"What!" exclaimed Edgar. "I have never been at college!"

"Now, now, you called yourself just now Edgar Bricheton."

"I? Never in my life," he replied, "my name is Paul Dupont. Then you are not Anatole Baudruche?"

"Not at all; my name is Henri Durand."

"Then," said Edgar, "we do not know each other!"

"That makes no difference now," said the pretty Aglae, "since you have already become acquainted with each other."

The two young men admitted the justice of the remark, dropped the conversation, and enjoyed some pleasantries over the circumstance which had brought them together.

So they dined at the restaurant, and Anatole had his hat repaired by Aglae's brother, and they all enjoyed the performance of the *Tour de Nesle*.

* * * * *

The incident had still a more pleasant termination. Anatole married Aglae, and they still preserve the blessed *pomme de terre* that brought them together. Not long after, too, Molesquin took for a wife a little chorus girl of the Theatre des Gobelins.

LOPEZ SURRANE.

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ON THE BEST - - - - - AUTHORITY.

MR. M. MACKENZIE, of 42, Garfield Street, Bootle, Liverpool, has received a volume of *Pearson's Magazine* for the best anagram on the words: "Answers to correspondents."

A VOLUME of *Pearson's Magazine* will be sent to the reader who forwards this paragraph, legibly written, in the smallest space. All attempts to reach this office by Monday, January 3rd, in envelopes marked "SMALL."

S. L. G.—No, the Victoria Cross has never been awarded to a woman; it is not designed for female decoration. In Germany heroines are decorated with the Iron Cross, and in France with the Legion of Honour.

TONY.—Luckily for London, it is quite true that there are some beneficial results derived from fogs. Scientists say that when a fog subsides it deposits various chemical and irritating particles which were held suspended in the atmosphere, and clears it from what was prejudicial to man.

D. L. C. — *Noblesse oblige* means that noble birth imposes the obligation of high-minded principles and actions.

AGNES.—If you wish to become a nurse you must go through the three years' course of training. Mere attendance at classes would not suffice, as you seem to think.

KIT.—The cork tree is very seldom met with in England. In Goodwood Park, however, there are some very fine specimens.

D. A. P.—No, Blondin was not the real name of the celebrated tight-rope walker. Being of a higher class of society than persons adopting such a vocation usually are, he adopted that name in order to preserve his *incognito*. His real name was Jean François de Gravelet.

A. M. Y. writes: "You seem to be very well up in the origin of various institutions and customs, etc., I wonder if you can tell me something about the origin of the 'Punch and Judy' show?"————This show is a relic of an ancient mystery, "Pontius Pilate and the Jews." Types or symbols of Mr. Punch have been discovered amongst the hieroglyphics of Egypt; and Herculaneum and Pompeii have given up the puppet after being buried sixteen centuries, so that it would be almost impossible to say how or when it first originated.

A. C.—Grey horses are the longest lived; creams are decidedly delicate, and are seriously affected by very warm weather.

W. R. M.—The exact spot opposite to London on the other side of the globe is the ocean south-east of New Zealand, near a small island, which was given the title of Antipodes Island, in honour of its position with reference to the greatest city in the world.

J. M.—"Chamber music" is music fitted for performance in a room as distinguised from concert music, or any music depending on many performers and plenty of space.

COLD FEET.—A good remedy is to wear a sock of thick brown paper inside the boot or shoe.

S. W.—No, the doctors in Sweden never send bills to their patients, the amount of remuneration being left entirely to the generosity of the latter.

GEE-GEE.—The great bell of Moscow is not the largest in the world. The distinction belongs to the bell hanging in the Temple of Clars at Kiuto, in Japan. It is peculiar in having no clapper, and is struck outside with a sort of wooden batt ring-ram. In point of volume and tone, however, our own bell of St. Paul's Cathedral can beat any other in the world.

BOB.—The raising of silkworms may certainly be a source of amusement to amateurs, but certainly not a means of making money. The cocoons are sold by weight, and you would have to keep about 2,800 worms in order to obtain 12lb. of cocoons, so as to yield a pound of reeled silk.

A MOTHER writes that the other day her little boy picked up a £10 note in the street, and promptly brought it home to her, who, after making inquiries, succeeded in returning the note to its lawful owner. Judge her dismay, however, when the generous-hearted individual placed twopence in her hand, "as a reward for her honesty," which it is needless to say was refused with indignation—and I don't wonder at it. Individuals who consider a twopenny reward sufficient recompense for returning a £10 note do not deserve to be treated honestly. When a person finds anthing of value, his or her best plan is to take it off to the police-station, and should it ever be claimed, the owner is practically compelled to leave a sufficiently satisfactory reward behind for the finder.

KILKENNY.—In some of the farming districts of China, pigs are harnessed to small waggons and made to draw them. I never heard of this being done in Ireland, as you seem to suppose.

CURIOS would like to know what becomes of the enormous quantity of oakum which is picked in our various prisons.————Oakum is chiefly used for caulking ships; it is also largely used for surgical dressing in the hospitals of Great Britain and on the Continent.

GOLDSMITH.—Certainly there are other birds besides the cuckoo who do not build nests. The goat-sucker and curlew lay their eggs on the ground, and sometimes move them from place to place; many aquatic birds lay their eggs on the rocks; other birds avail themselves of holes in trees instead of building nests, which answer the purpose equally well.

M. C. S.—There are schools in England for the special benefit of those who stammer. We do not give such addresses, but any doctor would recommend one to you.

G. R.—It is not usual for a man and woman to shake hands when first introduced, unless in exceptional cases. However, it would be exceedingly rude to ignore a proffered hand.

W. F.—A "trice" is the sixtieth part of a second.

W. K. M. asks: "What is the 'golden rose'?"————It is a present made every year by the Pope to the Royal lady who has most distinguished herself by loyalty to the Pope and to the Church of Rome. This rose is made of pure gold, and is chiselled with exquisite workmanship, being valued at £2,000. The golden rose has been presented to the ex-Queen Isabella of Spain, and to the ex-Empress Eugénie of France.

A. T. C.—Your informant is quite right; there is a place where there is only six days in a week, namely, Chatham Island, in the South Pacific. The explanation is that time is lost when travelling eastwards, and gained while travelling west. Chatham Island is situated just on the line of distinction between times and dates; it is very near the Antarctic circle, and the days and nights seem to get mixed up, which does not matter so much as it would if it were a more populated country.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 471. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 8TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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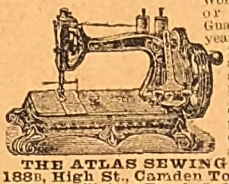

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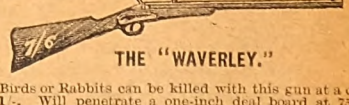

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

HIS ONE ROMANCE.

For the last thirty years, Herr Adolph Lebrecht, the registrar, had made his way to the office at precisely the same moment, and by exactly the same route, every morning of his life, with the exception of Sundays and public holidays. He always crossed the road at the same point, and the only deviation he ever made was entirely dependent on the weather. On fine mornings he stood for the space of two minutes to inhale the fresh breeze from the river when he reached the middle of the bridge; but when it was wet he went straight on, and occupied the extra time in divesting himself of his goloshes and mackintosh. For the registrar was not a strong man, and he had no one but his landlady to nurse him when he was ill.

So unfailing was his punctuality, that people on the route knew the time to a moment when he came in sight. He was a small, elderly man, of very ordinary appearance, and yet no one was better known or more noticed in that particular part of the city.

The children knew whether they were early or late for school by the place in which they met him, and old Frau Schmidt used to start her husband off to his place of business directly she saw the registrar coming round the corner. He thus unconsciously became a kind of human chronometer by which many others regulated their movements.

But there had once been a short period in which they would have found him a broken reed.

Five-and-twenty years ago, soon after he came to the city from his provincial home, when he was young and not bad-looking, with a tender longing for love and a passionate admiration for beauty hidden under his shy, awkward exterior, Adolf Lebrecht had once loitered in the path of duty and had suffered thereby.

For some inexplicable reason he had turned down a quiet side street one bright summer's morning, and as he passed one of the small villas of which the street was composed, he was struck by two quaint little plaster figures which adorned the gate posts.

They represented a grotesque, gnome-like little man and woman, the latter being in an angry attitude with a hand upraised, ready to strike her sulky companion.

Herr Lebrecht was amused and was just going to shake his fist at the little plaster shrew, when the fear of looking ridiculous made him cast an anxious look

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round to see if there were any spectators. It was a lovely morning, the blackbirds were singing as sweetly as they did in his old home, and the air was perfumed with the scent of the hawthornes and laburnums. No one seemed to be astir but himself, and with one more look at the funny little figures he started to walk on, when his eyes fell on a side window which looked out into the little garden.

He was very short-sighted, and so far had not liked to spoil his appearance by wearing spectacles, still there was no mistaking a girl's figure at the window in question. The laburnum seemed to mingle with her golden hair, and he thought her sweet lips were parted in a smile, for he could see the pearly teeth between them; her sleeves were turned back, leaving the round white arms bare to the elbow.

He was much too shy to look long at this charming apparition, so he hurried on, but in his confusion nearly tumbled over his walking stick that had got between his legs. Hot and flurried he pursued his way for a few yards, then the demons of curiosity and vanity got the better of his good manners, and he turned to see if she were still looking. Yes, there she was; if anything, she was leaning further out of the window, smiling sweetly, he felt sure; and he could catch a glimpse of her white arms through the moving foliage.

On that memorable morning he was seven minutes late at the office! But he met the inquiries and the wondering glances of the other men with a callous indifference, at which no one was more surprised than himself; and though he went conscientiously through the day's work, the dry documents seemed embellished with feathery sprays of golden laburnum, and the silence of the office broken by the sweet notes of the blackbird's song.

He was far too shy to make any inquiries as to who the girl was, and for some days he even lacked the courage to repeat his morning's escapade. He felt as if the passers-by would question his right to be there, as they knew his road lay in a different direction.

At last the longing to see his unknown beauty mastered even his fears, and the bright sunshine tempted him to turn boldly aside, so, with beating heart and flushed cheeks, he made his way to the enchanted spot.

His valour was rewarded, for there she was, and this time he looked long and earnestly. He noted that her hair was dressed high on her small head, and that her sleeves were again carefully turned back as she bent over the flowers growing in the balcony beneath her. It seemed to him as if she blushed under his admiring gaze, and his brain was in a whirl, for no woman had ever blushed under *his* eyes before. He boldly smiled back and had made up his mind to raise his hat before leaving, but, frightened at his own temerity, he checked his hand half way and put his tie straight instead.

From that day forward the registrar passed the villa regularly every morning, but he arranged his walk so that he arrived punctually at the office as the clock struck the first stroke of eight. The object of his adoration seemed to be of equally methodical habits, for she was always at the window ready to greet him and remained there till he was out of sight. This fact rejoiced his heart, and he also noted with pleasure that she dressed in a quaint, artistic style of her own, regardless of the disfiguring fashions of the day.

In any other case he would have censured such waste of time in a young girl, but one day he noticed that she had a little watering-pot in her hand, and, as he was devoted to flowers himself, he hailed another mutual taste and loved her the better for it. Then again, vanity is apt to upset the judgment of even the wisest of men, and her evident appreciation of himself was sufficient excuse for the apparent loss of the early morning hour.

His acquaintances noticed a great smartening up of the outer man, and even a frivolous tendency to hum, or whistle sentimental songs in these happy summer days, but though some may have guessed his secret, he confided in no one. It was too sacred to be discussed, even if he had had the courage to mention it.

This uninterrupted happiness was soon to have a disquieting element brought into it like all else on earth. Herr Lebrecht was in the habit of playing a game of whist after dinner in the restaurant he frequented, and one of his set, a young lawyer, named Edward Franke, happened to mention one evening that he had friends in the Garten Strasse, and let fall something about a very pretty girl. Lebrecht nearly revoked, and played shockingly for the rest of the evening. His heart was suddenly torn with pangs of jealousy, for there could not be two "very pretty" girls in that street, he felt sure, and as he looked at the good-looking, self-possessed, genial fellow before him, he realised that he would be a formidable rival for any man.

He made a desperate resolve. He must make sure of her while there was yet time, so he decided to declare himself by letter without delay. He made an excuse and asked for a postal directory before he went home that night; but there was no name given for the inhabitants of that particular house. Perhaps they were new-comers, any how she would understand. He *must* risk it!

For the next three days he spent all his spare time in the composition of that letter. He felt his dry, official style was against him, and yet he feared to give free rein to his passion lest it should jar on her delicate sensibilities. At last it was completed fairly to his satisfaction, and if the subject-matter left anything to be desired, certainly the caligraphy was a masterpiece. He copied it out three times before he was satisfied, and then took it with him the next morning.

After looking carefully round once or twice he drew the letter from his pocket and held it up for his beloved to see, and in so doing, his hand trembled so violently that he dropped it. Then he tried to hide it in the holly hedge that ran alongside the house, and after tearing his hands and dropping the note again, he managed to fix it where she could easily reach it.

All that day his mind was torn with suspense and excitement, and a sleepless night followed. The next morning was wet and stormy, and it was all the poor nervous young man could do to make his way towards the place where he felt his fate might be decided.

Just as he reached the house his umbrella was turned inside out, and a strong gust of wind carried his carefully brushed top hat out into the middle of the muddy street. He caught a fleeting glance at the window, and saw that his faithful love was there, undeterred by wind and weather, and then he started off on a wild and humiliating chase after his whirling head-gear.

The result of this catastrophe was a feverish cold which kept the registrar confined to the house for more than a week, and this unwonted period of inaction was devoted to fond dreams of the fair unknown. He attributed to her all the virtues he most admired in woman, and filled in the bare outline of his knowledge with all the delicate touches of his romantic fancy. The fact of her not having answered his letter by writing to the address he had given her, pointed to a sense of maidenly modesty that quite softened the weary time of waiting.

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His ambition awoke, and he decided that he would make a career for himself, and he pictured her at his side as he climbed the ladder of official promotion, till they both graced its highest rung.

As soon as he was convalescent he took an afternoon walk, and his steps involuntarily turned towards the Garten Strasse. He had no hope of seeing the object of his affections, but it was something even to pass her house again.

An unpleasant shock awaited him. There was the lawyer, dressed in a brand-new grey summer suit and faultless patent leather shoes, making his way in the direction of the very house. And worse than that,—there was his goddess at the window smiling and blushing at Frank, just as she had done to him for the last month. His rival passed the house, but when he had reached the corner he turned, and, in doing so, ran into the excited registrar.

"Ah, good-afternoon, Herr Lebrecht. Glad to see you out again. We have missed you very much at the whist table."

The registrar could not find words to answer these platitudes, his heart was too full, but he turned and walked silently to the house, struggling with his emotion.

Finding him a dull companion, the lawyer drew out his watch, and, after looking at it, said carelessly:

"Well, we shall meet to-morrow, I daresay. I have an appointment that I must keep, so I'll bid you good day. You don't look like yourself yet, you must be quiet for a bit longer."

With this Lebrecht burst forth into an incoherent torrent of reproaches. At first his companion thought his mind must be wandering, and was seriously alarmed; but by degrees the truth began to dawn upon him from the repeated allusions to the girl at the balcony, and he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Oh, so you think I want to cut you out in that fair lady's affections, do you? My dear fellow, calm yourself. I should never dream of taking the trouble, she's not worth it. She has exactly the same smile for every passer-by. She's a——"

"Stop, Herr Franke! I forbid you to speak one disparaging word of her in my hearing. She has been sufficiently insulted already," said the registrar with dignity.

"Oh, she won't mind. Will you, my dear?" and Herr Franke began impudently kissing his hand at the lady in question.

The registrar expected to see his divinity withdraw from the window in disgust, but to his grief and astonishment she remained there and seemed to like it. He concealed his bitter disappointment under the veil of righteous indignation, and continued to remonstrate.

"Open your eyes, man, and see what a paltry thing you're exciting yourself about!" exclaimed Franke, who was fast losing patience.

"Herr Franke, you shall give me satisfaction for this! You are a ——" and before he well knew what he was saying, an opprobrious epithet had passed his lips.

"Very well, Herr Lebrecht," answered the other quietly, "I've not time to settle the matter now, but you shall hear from me."

With that they parted, and the registrar never knew how he reached his rooms that day. All his beautiful dreams had been ruthlessly obliterated. He had seen enough to convince him that she was *not* what he had fondly imagined, and now he was going to risk his life for an unworthy object. His short sight would be very much against him in a duel, and he knew that the lawyer was the hero of many such contests. Still, life had now lost for him all that made it beautiful, so he might as well die at once as linger on in sorrowful loneliness.

The next day was Sunday, and a special messenger brought him the following note:

Sir.—I have fought too many duels to be afraid of any accusation of cowardice being brought against me, but I consider it my duty to decline to fight with you. I attribute your exciting conduct to your recent indisposition, and feel sure you will see the wisdom of my decision when you have regained your normal health. For your satisfaction let me add that I know nothing against the character of the lady at the window in the Garten Strasse, and that she is not to be blamed for her seeming levity, inasmuch as she is unable to control either her smiles or her movements. The fault lies with the landlord, who has allowed the work of a crack-brained artist tenant to remain on the blind window.—I am yours faithfully, Edward Franke.

No one ever ever knew what Adolf Lebrecht suffered on the receipt of the above. He shut himself up in his room till dusk, and then crept forth with his opera glass in his pocket to satisfy himself as to the nature of the object upon which he had lavished such a wealth of love and thought. One look through the glass convinced him that Herr Franke had told him the truth, for he could see the bold, masterly strokes drawn on the brickwork after the scene-painting style. The object had evidently been to get rid of the unsightly space where a window had been blocked up, so the artist had been lavish with his colours and had painted the white lace curtains behind the figure of the smiling, rosy maiden, in front of whom were the gay flowers in the balcony which she was represented as in the act of watering.

It was all wonderfully natural; the registrar's mortification knew no bounds. He found his note still among the holly leaves, discoloured by the damp, but otherwise intact, and he crushed it savagely in his hand till he reached the bridge, when he tied it to a stone and hurled it far from him into the rapid stream below.

He felt completely shattered by this rude awakening from "Love's Young Dream," and he passed a hideous night, haunted by the smiling face of the girl rushing after him with a pistol, while the lawyer cheered her on, waving the laboriously constructed love-letter in his hand.

The next morning he bought a pair of spectacles and bade farewell to romance.

Happily for him Herr Franke soon left the city to take a practice elsewhere, so no one was at hand to remind him of his wasted affections. He resumed his mechanical mode of life, and as years went on his heart seemed to shrink and shrivel up like his face, and he strenuously avoided every woman under fifty to the end of his days.

Years after, he met Herr Franke, who had risen to eminence in his profession; but had been singularly unfortunate in his choice of a wife. He held out his hand to the lonely little man saying:

"Well, Herr Lebrecht, are you as enthusiastic as ever?"

The tide of memory awakened by these words caused a deep flush of pain to overspread the features of his former would-be antagonist which caused the speaker to add in a softened voice:

"Be comforted, my friend, it would have been well for some of us if our youthful dreams had ended as yours did."

And with a hearty shake of the hand Herr Franke walked away with a bitter smile on his handsome features.

Mary Fermor.

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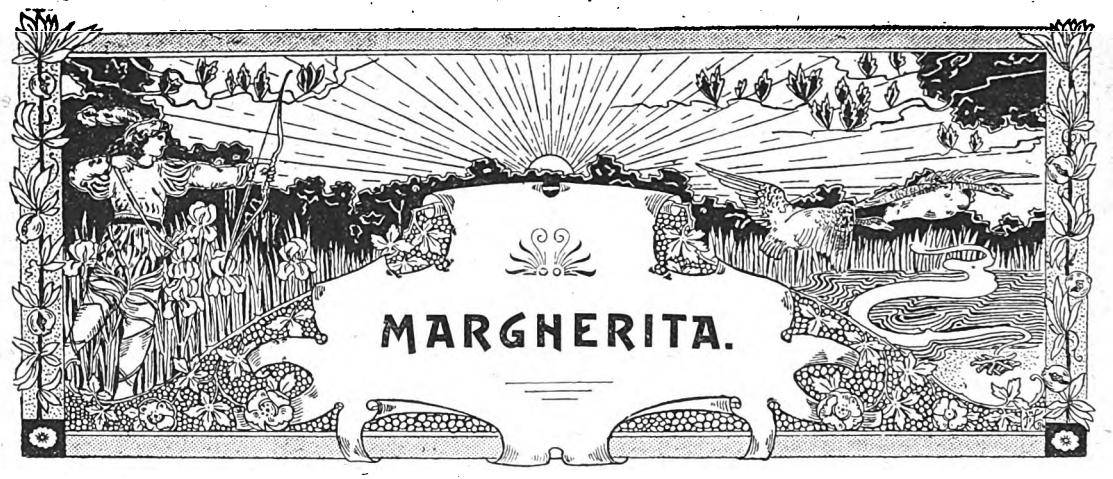

MARGHERITA.

MARGHERITA'S head was small and shapely, her hair fine and silky, like the hair that is supposed to be nourished only by blue blood.

But there was no blue blood in Margherita's veins. At least it had never been boasted of in her family. The blood that tinged to red the olive of her cheek was warm, rich blood, such blood as the honest Italian peasantry women delight to keep pure.

There was a touch of yellow in her hair that just saved it from being black as night, and gave to it little tints of gold when the sunlight fell on it here and there. This she owed to the Saxon blood of her mother; all the black was the father's.

How shapely her figure! And her hands—her hands were very small, Pedro had often noticed, in spite of much hard work in the gardens.

The gold in the hair Pedro had also long ago noted, and the fine set of the small head on the straight young neck.

There had come a change into Margherita's life, and she was telling him about it.

Had a stranger chanced along the road just then, past the little house with its great gardens that lay just outside the town, he would have cast more than a careless glance at the young couple who stood at the gate.

The girl wore a blue calico dress cut round at the neck, and with sleeves that fell loose to just below the elbow. Resting her elbows on the top piece of the gate and her chin in her palms, the sleeves fell away and left her slim, rounded arms bare almost to the shoulder.

The young man stood outside the closed gate and gazed earnestly down into the girl's laughing face.

"He is handsome as the girl is," the passing stranger would have commented. "Just as dark, and unmistakably a child of the same sunny clime."

Pedro's gardens were but a bit of a way from those of Margherita's father. His lettuce was always the crispest and greenest, and his celery was famed the country round. Margherita often helped him tie it into bunches, and the celery went away to market with a merry girl's bright laughter to season it. Pedro's cart never came back with a burden.

"You will go then?"

And the young man's gaze travelled across the wide slope of Margherita's father's garden until it rested on the turret-like end of a big house that just peeped over the brow of the hill and between the tall trees.

"You will go up there and serve rather than—— But pshaw! What am I saying?"

Margherita looked up eagerly now into his face, as if half expecting, half hoping that she would hear him say the something she felt sure he would say some day. But it was not said. In after years, when Pedro sat alone until far into the night, he wished that it had been.

The girl's expectant look changed quickly to one of wilfulness.

"And why not? Why should I not as well serve there as here?"

"Up there are fine ladies and—and fine men. You are pretty. You will lay by your calico dress and put on fine clothes. You'll forget about the gardens, and how to bunch celery and lettuce, and——"

His dark cheeks were burning now, and he had stretched his arm out over the gate. To a girl not used to the soft and musical accents his words would have meant much, but Margherita had known him always. Why, yes, since she was a tiny child, and he not much larger, when he used to break the orange flowers from the trees and shower them over her head in the garden of their poor but sunny home across the seas.

Some day—yes, maybe, some day, when Pedro had paid off all the debt on his gardens, he would ask her to be his wife. But gold was not as fast coming in England as once, when far away, they had thought. But why must she work in her father's gardens and wait—always wait? The only glimpse she had of the big, gay town was on market days, and now—now as a fine lady's maid she would perhaps see the town every day, and hear the music at the balls, and, oh——

But the thought of it all made her head dizzy.

Pretty? Yes, Pedro had said so. And the fine men!

Here the spirit of the coquetry seized her. But Pedro was to blame. She would never have thought of the fine men had he not said something about them. What was it he had said about the fine men up at the big house and herself? But Margherita could not remember.

* * * * *

There were only occasional glimpses to be had of Margherita now when Pedro drove his cart of fresh green things to the backdoor of the big house each morning. Margherita's young mistress had long been one of Pedro's patrons, and Margherita would take care now to see that no other carts were so liberally patronised as his.

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The short blue calico frock and the gay handkerchief that she used to wear over her head were gone. Instead, the trim and rounded figure was clad in a dark blue cloth gown, with white lace frills at neck and sleeves. The dark hair was tossed up in a fluffy mass at the back of the little head, and a tiny cap of lace and ribbons topped it all. In place of the stout leather shoes, slim black satin slippers, with saucy bows that called attention to them, were on her feet.

The first day that Pedro saw her like this she had run down the steps all out of breath, and flushed like a child to show herself to him. She had overturned a work basket from the little table from the window where she was sitting putting buttons on a long pair of gloves, when she spied Pedro's cart coming over the hill. The mistress had seen the flight of the little maid, and guessing the meaning of it, stooped smilingly, and picked up the scattered buttons.

Pedro looked at the girl and sighed.

"Why do you look so, you stupid? Don't you want to see me in pretty clothes? Well, maybe there are others who would like to."

And Margherita caught hold of her skirt at each side and spread it, displaying as she did her shapely ankles and small feet, and a white fluff of lace.

Pedro sighed again and mounted his waggon seat. Margherita's eyes filled with tears.

"Pedro! Pedro!" she called after him. "You are mean—I hate you!" But Pedro was driving away.

* * * * *

The summer days were fast passing. The gardens had grown and flourished, and there was another small sum to add to the debt, which now was "almost done," Pedro happily thought.

Margherita could find less time for a chat at the waggon in the morning. There was time enough in the evening, but she said she was busy getting ready to go away, to travel with her mistress abroad. "Back to Italy, Pedro; think of that," she had exclaimed the day that she had told him that her going was certain. Slowly the days were passing for Pedro, but, oh, how fast they went for Margherita! Margherita was light-hearted, but Pedro's heart was aching. There was gossip going afloat, and Margherita's was the one whose name gossip whispered.

"No good will come of it," said busy Gossip. "No good will come of it. It means no good when a girl meets a man to take walks only after the sun is down, and he one who is a fine gentleman. Margherita should know better. And then she goes no more to confession. Poor Pedro! If he knew!"

And Pedro did know, though he said over and over to himself that they were busybodies who said that Margherita was seen walking alone in the moonlight with a handsome stranger. It was one moonlight evening that Pedro, just strolling by the great house to maybe catch a glance of Margherita as she would chance to flit by some window, saw two figures going along a secluded path of the wide lawn. One was Margherita, the other that of a man tall and young. Pedro's heart grew sick. But he had just come up to see Margherita pass a window. He would not do so mean a thing as spy. He knew that Margherita had always loved him. He could trust Margherita. She was so good and honest. But it was Margherita walking there.

* * * * *

One day there came a letter. It was written on delicate paper and bore a crest. Margherita's father walked across the now almost bare gardens to where Pedro lived. He put the letter in Pedro's hands and said not a word as he turned away.

It was from Margherita's mistress, saying Margherita had left her before the steamship sailed from Liverpool, leaving a note behind, saying that she would be happier where she was going and begging that no one would look for her, and that she would be safe. "But please send word to the folks at home," Margherita had asked, "that I will not be back for a long time."

There was a cheque inclosed, Margherita's last wages, which she had not asked or waited for.

How the winter came and wore away, and spring once more with its warm sunshine coaxed the seed in the garden to send up fresh green shoots, Pedro could never remember. But all the warm season had been good, that was certain, for the last of the debt was paid.

Next summer there would be a stall in the market for Pedro to tend, and a man to look after the gardens and the waggon. If Margherita had only waited a little longer! But it was winter now, and a long time until the stall in the market would need attention, and there was plenty of time to think in the long evenings of Margherita, from whom no news had come.

"It will never come," Pedro said to himself, but he cheered the old father with the assurance that Margherita was a good girl, and that in time she would send them some word. That she would never do but what was right, never fear.

* * * * *

Springtime again, and a letter for Pedro. The postman who rode out that way on horseback brought it just as it was time to light the lamp and put more wood on the fire to get supper. The postman was late in his rounds that day, the roads were so muddy. The letter should have been there hours ago but for that.

Pedro almost snatched the letter from the man. Why did he stand there and talk? Didn't he know that perhaps it was a message he had been waiting through long, weary months for, and now delayed it?

It was just a scrap of writing. It only said "Pedro, come," and gave an address.

The roads were muddy, and it was a long way to the station, but what of that? There was a good horse in the stable, and if one travelled fast the train that left in an hour could be caught, and by midnight Pedro would be beside Margherita.

It was just midnight when a quiet-faced little sister met him at the hospital door. Pedro looked at her intently. The good woman, so used to reading anxious looks, said gently: "She still lives."

Then it was as he feared. Maybe Margherita would die! All Pedro's impetuous haste left him, and he followed the little sister softly on tip-toe, as though he were going where there was a sleeping child.

On a little iron bed in the tiny, spotless room, with another sister bending over her, lay the girl—pale and thin. Her dark hair was cut close and clung in little rings above her forehead.

"Yes, you may speak to her. It can do no harm. She may not know you now," the sister whispered.

The strong figure of the man bent over the little cot, and "Margherita" was all he said. The girl opened her eyes.

"Pedro," she answered; "yes, it is Pedro. We were married, Pedro. You did not think we were not, did you? I am sorry, Pedro. So sorry. Poor Pedro!"

The sisters drew him away. There was a sigh, and a little flutter of the slender hands on the white coverlet, and the sister at the foot of the bed made the sign of

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the cross, and said: "It is all over." But Pedro, bending down, saw that faint breaths stirred the ruffles of her nightgown, and all that night he sat by her side. The sisters came and went, and in the morning the doctor came and said that Margherita was better—that she had slept.

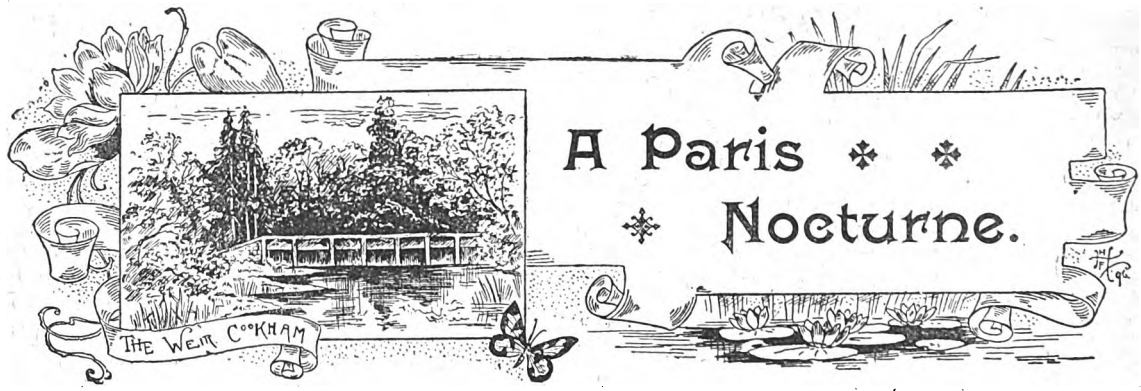
Then Pedro went away. Margherita woke up and told the sisters the dream she had had. Some weeks after that she told it to Pedro, and he said she had not dreamt.

Then Margherita told the story of the years that had not for either of them known happiness—of how she was tired of as a toy, of unkind treatment, of desertion, and the coming of kind death to set her free—free to go back to Pedro's love and ask his forgiveness.

The lettuce and onion were sprouting high above the ground, and there were wide stretches of green on every side when Margherita came back home. She had not forgotten how to bunch lettuce, or celery either, and as she worked the old colour and life came back into her face.

The stranger who might have passed that way when she stood at the gate long ago and told Pedro that she was going up to the great house on the other side of the wood would have noticed little change in her. The blue calico dress and gay handkerchief looked just as bright as ever, and Pedro thought there was no change in the girlish face except it might be a trifle less of laughter in the eyes. In time the new neighbours coming in had many good words of praise for Pedro's thrifty wife. "He was a lucky man, very, to have a wife to turn her hand so well to helping him."

Helen Noanes.



"The price will do."

"Monsieur is most kind."

"And—ah!—let me see. This is the fifth floor, I believe?"

"No, monsieur," simpered the landlady, slightly drooping her eyes.

"But you told me," began the gentleman with the Bohemian air, Greek nose, and shaggy, blond curls, "you told me, madame——"

"Yes, monsieur," Mme. Toudouch half stammered; "I—I had forgotten. On the fifth floor there is a room occupied, and monsieur wished this floor—the fourth—to be quite vacant."

"Yes," was the lingering reply. With a remarkably white hand, though large and muscular, the gentleman stroked a clear-chiseled chin. Suddenly, with this same hand, he made a sweeping gesture: "I will take all the little suite; but, mind you, I expect quiet during the week that I am here. I shall rest and drowse most of the time. I shall have no visitors—absolutely none. Frankly, I shall be in retirement. An absorbing affair—a matter of business, most wearisome business—will soon engross me, and hence I am taking this preparatory term of repose. You are sure I shall not be disturbed, madame—absolutely sure?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, absolutely."

"My name is—er—Doruc—Albert Doruc."

"Thank you, monsieur."

"Please let my luggage be sent up. You have, no doubt, perceived that it is very small. I shall ask you for a cup of coffee each morning—good, strong coffee—a roll and a bit of butter. Please see that all three are excellent. Stay, madame."

And here M. Duroc glanced about him at the shabby, but clean apartment. "Perhaps you would prefer that I should give you half the agreed sum in advance." He then drew out a purse, and as he did so, the old woman's withered face became one broad smile of pleasure.

After she had gone, Duroc leant from one of his dormer windows, and looked at Paris below the slumbering azure of a perfect autumn afternoon. Yonder was Ile St. Louis, with Notre Dame so near that one could almost make out the grimaces of its ghoulish gargoyles. Ah, dear old Notre Dame, with the adorable sculptures of its main doorway, saints and martyrs all tangled together like roses in a huge wreath! Dear old "other side of the river!" What thrilling memories it evoked! There wound the Seine, with its little toylike steamboats, bound for Charenton, for Suresnes, for numberless ports besides. And the stately fawn-coloured buildings on either bank, skirting so palatially each curvilinear verge. Ah, the delicious days of boyhood, and to be here once again where he had dwelt for so many youthful years! How refreshing after the loud, bustling life of that other Paris, whose boulevards and cafés, and theatres, and salons teemed with a thousand ambitions, rivalries, hates!

"I will dine over here near the Luxembourg," meditated Duroc, "in a little restaurant, which has long ago forgotten my existence. Then I will come back to my

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placid refuge and enjoy the first serene sleep of seven, all of which I hope will be equally happy. How nice to be hidden away like this! After Monday next my work must begin. Meanwhile rest, rest, rest, before the tremendous task that awaits me."

Later Duroc carried out his intention. He took a stroll through obscure, yet familiar streets for nearly an hour after dining, and then returned to his new lodgings. He was a light sleeper, yet a healthful one. Hardly five minutes after blowing out his candle he had fallen into just the pleasant slumber that he craved.

"La—la—la—la—lah—la—la—la—tira, lira, lira—lah—la—tira lirah, lira—r r r!"

Then the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, and thrum, thrum, thrum of a piano; then the woman's voice and also the piano, both dawning together into awakened consciousness; then a man's basso voice, repeating every tira-lira, every lah of the feminine one.

By this time Duroc was thoroughly awake. He soon lighted a candle and looked at his watch—ten minutes past midnight. The vocal exercises continued. Sleep was now impossible. He anathematised his landlady. Why had she dared to lie like this? Had she not promised him peace? The detestable sounds came too plainly from a room just above him. At a quarter past one o'clock they ceased. Soon afterwards he heard a man's step descend the staircase, passing his door.

The chain of sleep having thus been rudely broken, it was three good hours before he rejoined its disrupted links. He awoke at about nine in the morning, full of indignant protest. Finding the landlady downstairs, he poured upon her a torrent of reproaches. Was it for this that she had accepted his advance payment? Had she not assured him that his lodgings should be quiet? Of course, all the while, she knew of these two owls upstairs, these midnight cats, with their bass and treble miaulings! And the piano, too, a ramshackle thing at best! Was this honest dealing? Was it not shameless deceit?

But the landlady could now afford to be a trifle haughty. Was she not in sweet possession of the deposit?

"Monsieur is unjust! I supposed that he would be fast asleep when they began. The young man never comes till midnight."

Duroc gave a groan and swept past his landlady. He hated all chichancery, and he resolved forthwith to quit the lodgings. Then his wound rankled. Those few extra francs were nothing; but the cool imposition of it all!

He would remain for one day more and a night at least. If the tira-liras again awoke him, as of course they could not fail to do, he would make an emphatic request that these disturbers of his slumbers should keep silent. This would be wreaking a kind of vengeance on his landlady, for neither would she relish having her duplicity publicly disclosed, nor would the fair repute of her dwelling be thereby enhanced.

"Perhaps, after all, though," mused Duroc, "I shall sleep through the clamour of to-night. If not, farewell for ever to Mme. Toudouche."

At ten that evening Duroc ascended his staircase with the intention of retiring. Scarcely had he closed his door when madame's somewhat plaintive voice caused him to reopen it.

"I am so sorry it has happened, monsieur. Of course I realise that monsieur is perfectly right. I have not an idea who she is. Apparently, however, she is very poor. That touched my heart." And Mme. Toudouche made the motion of wiping away a tear. "She says the gentleman is her brother. She pays very little for the room. The piano is her own. She had it brought up herself. And now, M. Duroc, I have come to assure you that you need only command, and I will obey."

"Command? Obey, Mme. Toudouche?"

"Yes, monsieur. It is not right that you should be kept awake like this. I will tell the young girl when she comes to-night that I shall ask no further pay of her, and that she must at once cease from these disturbing practices."

"What a poor little handful of sous that 'pay' must be," thought Duroc, with irrepressible cynicism.

Somehow, after the landlady had departed, and while flinging himself into the only easy chair that his room contained, a twinge of consciousness assailed him. Might he not, after all, be thwarting some effort of self-support on the part of this girl—just referred to as possibly very poor? There might be cogent reasons why she should hold these weird concerts with her brother. "Well, no matter what happens to-night," he meditated, "I will endure it. And to-morrow, if I have been annoyed as I was last night, I can make a change of quarters. Meanwhile the most merciful plan is to see Mme. Toudouche at once and tell her that she must restrain her veto; that it is my earnest wish."

But soon, as it happened, a drowsiness overtook him, and he fell asleep there in the armchair. He was a man in perfect health, but for many days past he had been constitutionally tired by a special pressure of work.

Awakening abruptly after what he felt to have been a long and wholly unforeseen nap, he heard the piano banging upstairs, and the tira-liras blended with its notes.

Rubbing his eyes he laughed aloud. "It's hard to be charitable," he muttered. "How strange I should have fallen asleep like this. I suppose it's my broken rest of last night."

He rose with the immediate intention of undressing. All at once the sounds ceased. Then came another noise—that of voices. He opened his door and went out into the hall.

Upstairs Mme. Toudouche was vehemently talking. "I meant to wait up for you and tell you, mademoiselle, but I was too fatigued, and I lost myself in a long doze. Now I must insist that you stop your singing and playing at this unseemly hour—you and the young man whom you call your brother."

"He is my brother, Mme. Toudouche, just as I have said."

"Yes, madam, she is my sister."

"Well, I can't help that. The gentleman downstairs will not stand it, and he is perfectly right. I——"

Duroc listened no longer. He quickly mounted the steps leading to the upper hall. There he saw in the dim light three figures.

"Ah! M. Duroc," exclaimed the landlady, "it's you? Of course you have been distressed again by this wretched business. And slight wonder."

The light from the near room struck full on a pale, girlish face as "mademoiselle" advanced several steps.

"Oh, M. Duroc, may I beg you to let us go on? This young man is my brother, though madame here has hinted otherwise. I cannot play and sing at home. I had the piano brought here. It's the only possession of the least value that we now have left. My brother plays in the orchestra at one of the small Montmartre theatres. He would have time to teach me in the day,

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but I have no time then. I am always at the bedside of my poor, sick mother. She takes her sleeping potion at half-past eleven every night, and till half-past one it keeps her quiet. In a week from now my sister, who is a shop-girl at the Bon Marché, will lose her position. They are discharging hands there, now that the dull season has begun. But I have been positively promised a place in the chorus of the new opera at the Comique, provided I can only learn how to use my voice a little better than I use it now. My sister, you see, monsieur, will then become my mother's nurse, and the money that she can no longer earn I shall earn instead. At least, this is my hope, for it seems too hard that the whole burden of our family maintenance should fall upon poor Achille here. Look at him, monsieur; Achille is not strong. See how pale and thin he is, and he is only just nineteen. But he has marked musical talent, and he is helping me a very great deal. Oh, pray do not have us turned away! It has cost so much for us to get our piano up here and pay the rent of the room—so much, I mean, for us in our forlorn poverty!"

The girl's lips quivered with entreaty as she paused. Her eyes, large and black, were quite tearless, but they burnt with a keen, dry shine.

"And what is this new opera," asked Duroc gently, "in the chorus of which you hope to obtain a position?"

"Does not monsieur know?" here politely asked Achille, whose slender frame was as dim to Duroc as the latter's taller and burlier one was dim to him. "It is *Fiordelisa*, by the celebrated composer M. Albert Charantelle. He is the writer of five or six other works, all of which have been great successes here in Paris. It is said that *Fiordelisa*, will eclipse them all. M. Albert Charantelle is a strange gentleman in certain ways, though greatly beloved, I am told, by a wide circle of friends. For instance, when he has thoroughly completed an opera, and everything is ready for the first rehearsal, he has an odd way of disappearing from the world for a week or more, and nobody can find his whereabouts. They say that he has now disappeared like this. It is to gain rest, complete rest, or so I have been informed, before the great labour shall begin of putting the opera on the stage. But punctually on the morning of rehearsal he will appear at the Opera Comique and take up his baton and drill the singers and the choruses untiringly for days, until everybody is perfect in every part."

"Ah, indeed," said Duroc, rather deep down in his throat.

Without another word he moved past the threshold of the small, bare little room, and seated himself before the little upright old-fashioned piano. For a moment his fingers wandered dreamily over its keys, and then, with almost magic amplitude and finish, a gush of the most beautiful melody burst upon the stillness. As it continued it seemed to blossom even more than to sound. You might have fancied it was some garland woven from flowers of music by the hands of invisible spirits. The poor little ill-tuned piano seemed to its listeners an instrument of diapason divine.

Entranced, intoxicated, the young girl felt her brother's hand clutch her own.

"It is he, Gilberte," gasped Achille. "It is M. Albert Charantelle himself. I once heard him play at a concert, and some one near me said: 'If he had not chosen to be a great composer he would have been the greatest of pianists.'"

"Good Heavens!" faltered the young girl, and Mme. Toudouche, enveloped in an extremely unbecoming wrapper, heard a little cry of consternation.

Here the music slowly ceased in a ripple of tinkling arpeggios. With his hands dropping away from the keys, M. Albert Charantelle turned towards the young girl.

"My dear mademoiselle, you must accept from me a louis to-night for the sake of your poor mother."

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Gilberte, bursting into tears.

"And at ten o'clock precisely, next Monday morning, present yourself with this card at the stage entrance of the Opera Comique. Then you shall see what you shall see. From your tira-liras I feel already quite convinced that you will do excellently well in at least one or two of the choruses of *Fiordelisa*."

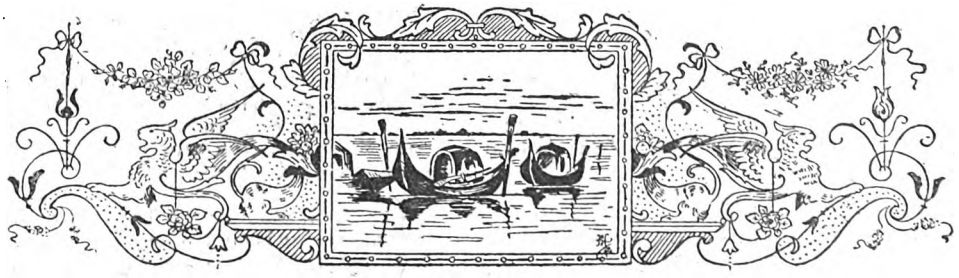
Gilbert passionately kissed the card.

"Oh, Achille, you are quite right! It is he—it is the great M. Charantelle himself! Ah! what a wonderful stroke of good luck!"

"And, now," said the gentleman, running one hand through his short, glossy curls, while he fixed the gaze of his brilliant, tawny brown eyes first on Achille and then on his sister, "I have to beg a favour of you both. Please give me a few quiet nights from now until Monday next. Will you not kindly grant me this favour?"

Achille broke into a laugh at what struck him as the delicate satire of these words: but Gilberte wiped her eyes, from which the grateful tears had not yet ceased to flow.

FRANCOIS COLLETT.



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THE CLIENTS OF THE FORTUNE TELLER

(Told by Han Chu, on board the flower boat "Heavenly Bliss," Canton River.)

IT was a lovely afternoon in the middle of summer. The day was too hot to sit in the house, and the young ladies had taken their work and gone down to the Pavilion which stood upon an island in the stream that ran through the willow garden.

Their names were Hyacinth and Honeysuckle; and each had been so largely endowed by the Mother of All Things, that it would have taxed the wisdom of Confucius to decide between them.

Happy as the birds which built in the branches, the demon of jealousy had never entered their innocent young breasts.

Cousins by nature, they were companions by choice; and, being near neighbours, some hours of every day were spent together — working in the house, chatting in the garden, or feeding the tame carp in the fish pond. Hyacinth hadn't a thought which she did not share with Honeysuckle; and Honeysuckle confided to Hyacinth every maiden meditation which visited her youthful soul.

The cousins rose and walked out on the balcony.

The young ladies were the only daughters of blue-button mandarins.

Their fathers held official appointments in the province of the Four Streams—the most delightful region in the Imperial dominions—and resided in the suburbs of the important city of Mienchu on the Fu River—a tributary of the mighty Yang-tse—which, as everybody knows, rises in the Valley of Heaven, and flows thence through the Flowery Land.

The abode of Hyacinth was named Felicity House, while the dwelling of Honeysuckle was known as Paradise Place.

To describe them is a task beyond the power of mere mortal men. Suffice it to say that each was such as the Sons of the Stars might have envied, or the greatest of the Five Hundred Genü have chosen for his earthly tabernacle.

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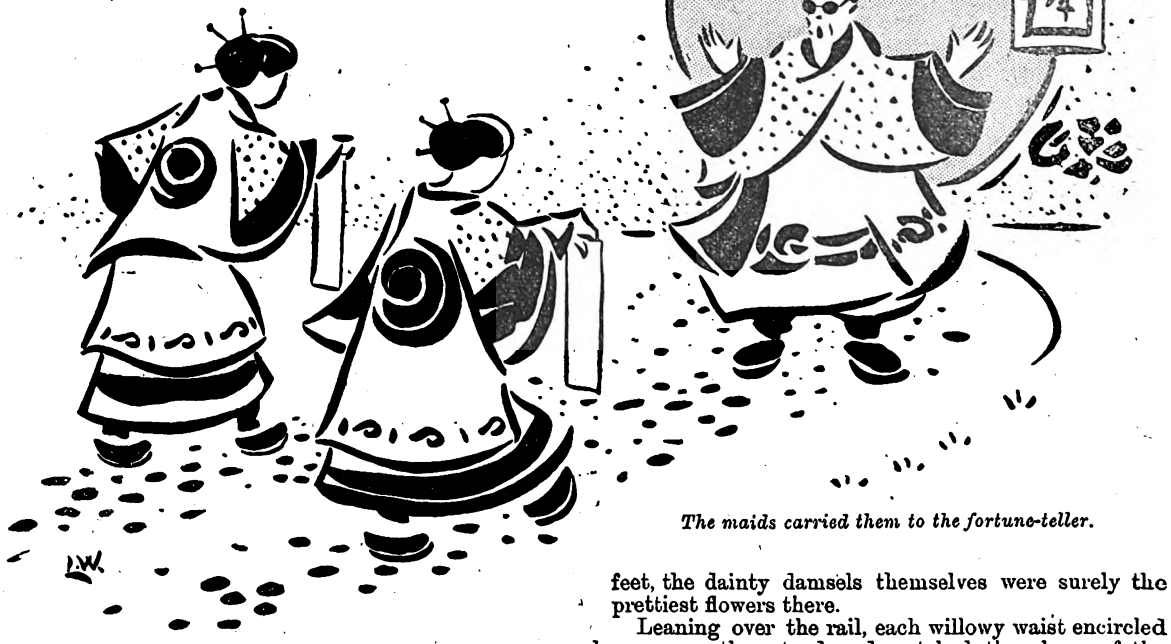
The cousins were delightful girls—tall and finely shaped, with complexions of ivory, and willow-like waists. Their eyebrows—arched like the rainbow—shaded eyes which dazzled by their brightness and intoxicated by their beauty.

Their mouths were perfect rosebuds, while their daintily shod feet were certainly the most provoking little things in China—being exactly of the length prescribed for the Court beauties in the palace of the Emperor at Pekin, which, you know, is just three inches long.

But to add to the attractions of these peerless paragons, Hyacinth and Honeysuckle, and, further, to enhance the value of their great physical perfections, the girls possessed all the virtues commended in the Mother of Mencius, and were in the first bloom of heavenly youth. By a singular coincidence, which, however, may account for their twin-like endowments, they were born at the same hour of the same day in the same month of the same year—being the hour of the Dragon on the fourth day of the eighth month in the fifth year of the reign of Heenfung.



The maids carried them to the fortune-teller.

Consequently, on the day when they sat together in the Flower Pavilion, embroidering slippers for the paternal feet, the girls would be fourteen years old.

"Shall we go on to the balcony and watch the gold-fish in the water?" said Hyacinth, throwing down her work. "I'm quite weary of this eternal stitching."

"Really, now, I feel just that way myself, dear," answered Honeysuckle sympathetically, "and the Shantung pattern's very trying to the eyes."

The apartment in which the young ladies were at work opened on to a balcony that was filled with flowers. Azaleas and poinsiettias, lilies and China-asters, roses and honeysuckles, hyacinths and hydrangeas—in tubs, in pots, in vases—there were flowers everywhere, flowers of every shape and every hue.

The cousins rose and walked out on the balcony Dressed in silken robe and pleated petticoat of purple satin, with enamelled hairpins thrust through their shining tresses, bangles on their shapely wrists, and the smallest of embroidered shoes upon their tiny dots of feet, the dainty damsels themselves were surely the prettiest flowers there.

Leaning over the rail, each willowy waist encircled by an arm, they stood and watched the gleam of the glittering scales, as the gold and silver fish darted to and fro under the crooked bridge which connected the island with the other parts of the garden.

"Jasmine tells me there's a famous conjurer and fortune-teller in the town," said Hyacinth presently, throwing a few rose petals into the water.

Jasmine was the maid who waited upon Miss Hyacinth.

"Yes, so Autumn-Leaf was saying, as she brushed out my hair for me last night," replied Honeysuckle, toying with a lily-spray that was caressing her cheek.

"Such a chance might not occur again, dear, in a lifetime," murmured Hyacinth.

"In the Book of Wise Sayings it is written that the man who casteth away his opportunities shall himself be cast away," put in Honeysuckle.

"And in the Book of Fate who shall read but he who is learned in the Wisdom of the Fathers?" observed Hyacinth.

"Even this fortune-teller," suggested Honeysuckle.

"I believe he has been sent expressly for the purpose,"

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asserted Hyacinth. "I am fourteen years old, and I never heard of a fortune-teller being seen in the town before."

"Nor I, dear," affirmed Honeysuckle. "It would be a mighty poor compliment to the Giver of Good Things to neglect to profit by the visit of his servant."

"He was at Pekin only a week ago, where, Jasmine understands, he told the fortunes of all the ladies of the Imperial harem."

"And cast the horoscope of the Emperor's favourite daughter."

"And was received in private audience at the Summer Palace. Jasmine, who was shopping in Idol Street yesterday, says the news was all over the city——"

"And was decorated with the order of the——"

"Dragon and the Sun. Yes, I know, dear. Jasmine always brings me the latest."

"Autumn-Leaf, my dear Hyacinth, always gives me the earliest and fullest intelligence of what is going on in the town. The man was transported from Pekin on a flying carpet."

"In three hours. And his name——"

"His common, vulgar name is Li Ming; but his professional appellation is Star of the Morning, and his fee for unmarried girls of good family is ten ounces of pure silver."

"Your information agrees with mine, dear, exactly," said Hyacinth amiably, "and seeing that we have now reached an age when the marriage brokers will soon be busy arranging for our bethrothal, would not this be a fine opportunity to learn the sort of husbands we are likely to get; and how soon we shall ride in the festive chair, and be lifted over the fire which is lit at every 'newly-married' threshold?"

"The very thing, pet, that I was going to ask you," rejoined Honeysuckle, with a ripple of laughter as sweet as the bells in the Temple of Heaven at Pekin. "I'm afraid, dear, it was more about Star of the Morning that I was thinking than about my father's slippers, while I was trying to follow the intricacies of the Shantung pattern."

"Of course, dear, we cannot ask him to come to us; nor, without running a fearful risk, can we venture to visit him. Happily, however, this is not necessary. Jasmine, who has lived in the best families, tells me that ladies of quality never think of a personal consultation with the fortune-teller. The ladies of the Imperial harem, for instance, would only send him the eight characters, together with the colour of their hair and eyes, and the length of the ring finger. In the case of a fortune-teller so world-famous as Star of the Morning, that would be quite sufficient."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Honeysuckle. "Just what Autumn-Leaf——"

"You won't find his equal out of China, according to Jasmine; and what I propose, my dear, is, for each to write down the eight characters representing the year, month, day and hour of birth, with the etceteras, and get our maids to carry them to the fortune-teller and bring back his reply. There's paper—red paper will be best—red for luck, you know. Besides, sweet, it will convey to Mr. Ming a delicate hint——"

"That we are anxious to have our feet tied with the red silk with which Heaven binds the feet of those whose marriages have been arranged for them in the courts above."

"Exactly. They always expect one to show which way the hare runs. If a girl wants to hear about a husband, it's aggravating to have longevity and everything else put in, while the man she wants to hear about is left out."

"What a dear, good, thoughtful girl you are," said Honeysuckle.

"There's paper then, and pencil; ink-slab and ink in the Pavilion," said Hyacinth, "so let's set about it at once, shall we, dear?"

The cousins filled up the slips and the maids carried

Rushing out of the Pavilion.

them to the fortune-teller; and when the two girls met at the Pavilion in the willow garden next day, each had her answer ready to show to the other.

"My husband," said Honeysuckle, seating herself in a low bamboo chair, "is to be tall and rich and handsome. He will have a dark, almond eye, and a true Tartar nose—a man who can count the graves of his ancestors. His father is one of the men most respected in the province; and the son, who has passed all his exams with honours, will probably succeed him in office. 'The name of your beloved, that is to be,' wrote Star of the Morning, 'it would not be proper for you to know until the broker has spoken to your father; but his pigtail makes him the admiration of every woman who beholds him, while his dress of imperial blue and olive green proclaims him a man of taste and station. He will marry before he is twenty. May Heaven give happiness!'"

"Do you know, my dear Honeysuckle," said Hyacinth coldly, "that you have been describing my husband?"

"That is impossible——" began Honeysuckle.

"Nothing of the kind, miss," interrupted Hyacinth. "I tell you it is *my* husband that——"

"I beg your pardon——"

"You need it."

"I shall not stay here to be insulted," exclaimed Honeysuckle rising.

"Don't let me detain you, pray," returned Hyacinth sarcastically.

"I declare I will never set foot inside your doors again," cried Honeysuckle, rushing out of the Pavilion and over the crooked bridge which spanned the "trout stream."

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"I'll send for you when I want you," bawled Hyacinth after the flying figure of her cousin.

Honeysuckle waited till she was hidden by the willows on the other side of the stream; then bursting into tears: "It really is too bad of Hyacinth," she sobbed, "and I'll never speak to her again. She is a jealous—horrid little thing; jealous because Star of the Morning has given me the Prefect's son, Li Chang, for my husband, and she'd like him herself. Autumn-Leaf knew who was pointed at directly she heard his description. I thought Hyacinth a better bred girl than to show such a nasty temper."

Meanwhile, Hyacinth, after firing her last shot at Honeysuckle, had thrown herself on a pile of cushions, and wept sorely. "The rude, impertinent minx," she stammered, after the first paroxysm had subsided, "to persist in claiming him for hers after I told her he was mine. Such behaviour is perfectly shameless. She's jealous, the little fool, because I wouldn't give in to her. If she hadn't been so downright ill-mannered as to contradict me to my face, I would have told her his name. Jasmine recognised him at once. 'It's Te Fung, Colonel Wen's son,' says she. Wonderfully clever fellow that fortune-teller. But I never should have supposed that Honeysuckle had such a beastly temper."

* * * * *

Mr. Ming, otherwise Star of the Morning, having filled his pockets at Mienchu, packed up his traps and departed, and in the fulness of time the ladies Hyacinth and Honeysuckle found that the marriage broker had been to their respective fathers, seeking to tie their pretty feet with the red silk of matrimony.

Greatly to their surprise, however, the husbands who presented themselves, were neither Li Chang nor Te Fung; yet by some mystery inexplicable to the brides, they were as proper a pair of phœnixes as the gentlemen whom they expected.

How Star of the Morning had contrived it, was as great a puzzle to them as how the Court Juggler taught the Emperor's mule to speak; but each got a husband just suited to her mind, though neither got the man they had quarrelled about; and, at the feast which followed the ceremony, jealousy was swallowed up in congratulations; while both agreed that the fortune-teller was certainly full as clever as they thought him.

Perhaps Star of the Morning may have guessed that in China there was possibly more than one tall, rich, handsome man who wore a long pigtail.

H. HUNTER.

A Marvellous Magazine.

6D. *The January Pearson's.* 6D.

ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK. (Illustrated.) In this popular feature, which will be continued month by month in *Pearson's Magazine*, are reproduced some of the best pictures of the most prominent painters in all parts of the world. They will be accompanied by a series of notes on subjects of special interest in art, and on artistic curiosities.

A VISION OF THE FLOOD. This magnificent poem by Mr. George Griffith is illustrated with a series of splendid oil paintings by Mr. Abbey Altson, R.B.A.

THE EYE OF A GOD. (Illustrated by D. Murray Smith.) By W. A. FRASER. This story tells of the theft of a ruby from the eye of a Burmese God and of the surprises and disappointments in store for the distracted officials in their efforts to recover it.

HOW RAILWAY MEN FIGHT SNOW. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By MERRIDEN HOWARD. Some remarkably interesting particulars are given of the methods employed by the big Railway Companies in removing snow from the permanent way. The article is illustrated with a number of striking photographs, showing engines charging the snowdrifts, a steam rotary plough forcing its way through the snow, and other remarkable sights.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. No. VII.—The Pearl Poachers. (Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.) By CUTCLIFFE HYNE. Kettle is the hero of the day, and his adventures, which Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne relates in this story, are as exciting as anyone could wish.

THE CROWNS OF THE WORLD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By A. O. TIDBITS. Delightful reproductions are here given of the crowns belonging to the rulers of the chief kingdoms of the world. They are wonderful examples of beauty and magnificence.

POST OFFICE NEW YEAR CARDS. (Illustrated with examples.) By GEO. DAY. The Post Offices throughout the world celebrate the New Year in a most delightful way by the mutual interchange of New Year cards. A number of the most interesting examples are reproduced.

REAL GHOST STORIES. No. I.—The Story of the Spaniards, Hammersmith. (Illustrated by B. E. Minns.) By E. and H. HERON.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by A. Popini.) By W. L. ALDEN. Mr. Alden contributes some very amusing comments upon the little troubles which are continually besetting the poor mortal in the ordinary routine of life.

A DEALER IN BRAINS. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By R. C. BURT. Major Pond is the man who has gained for himself this title. He is the great lecture agent in America. Many well known Englishmen have lectured in the States under his auspices, and as may be imagined he has a whole fund of interesting reminiscences which he has placed at the disposal of the author of this article.

DREAR WINTER. (Illustrated by Hana.) By PHILIP HEMERY.

THE COMMANDANT'S WIFE. (Illustrated by A. Kemp Tebby.) By Mrs. ORPEN. A complete story.

LONDON'S COURT OF KING SOLOMON (Illustrated by S. Nation.) By J. MALCOLM FRASER. Few people are aware that in London at the present moment there exists a Court of Justice, conducted upon almost the same lines as was the Court of King Solomon in the olden days.

SONG. By CRANSTOUN METCALFE.

CHINESE STREET CALLS. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By ALFRED EDMONDS. One phase of Chinese life is admirably described in this article. It appears that every vendor of goods in China has a special "instrument of musical torture," upon which he heralds his approach. We have been fortunate to obtain a complete collection of all the instruments thus used, and we are able to publish the first series of photographs of them that have ever appeared in this country.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PORTHAMPTON EXPRESS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By VICTOR L. WHITECHURCH. In this remarkable story the mystery of the disappearance of Balmaceda, the famous President of Chili, is explained in a most striking way.

THE BRAVEST REGIMENT. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By GEORGE A. WADE. The author of this article has set himself to answer the question: "Which regiment of the British Army has most distinguished itself on the field of battle?" He draws some very interesting conclusions from the facts at his disposal.

A TUNNEL OF MUSHROOMS. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By FRANK SYDENHAM. In Edinburgh is a disused railway tunnel which is employed for the cultivation of mushrooms. We reproduce interesting photographs not only of the tunnel itself, but also of some curious shaped mushrooms which have been grown there.

FOR THE HONOUR OF FRANCE. (Illustrated by C. Lawson Wood.) By JOHN LE BRETON. A complete story.

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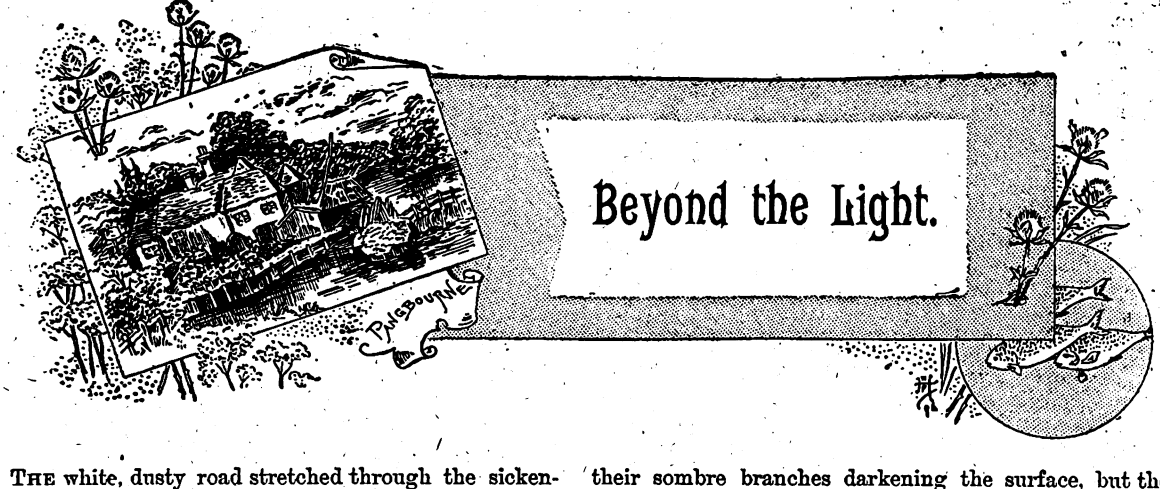

Beyond the Light.

THE white, dusty road stretched through the sickening glare of the sun in and out among the hills.

The coloured, delapidated house stood away from any shade. The sun went in boldly through the broken shutters.

A woman came outside for a moment and gave a tin cup of milk and a piece of bread to two children who sat huddled together on the fallen step.

The boy was the taller; he was ragged, and his skin showed through his soiled shirt. The girl had tears mixed with the dirt on her face.

She was so little, and it was not unnatural she should cry.

"They took her away in a box," said the boy. "I asked the fat man where. He said: 'To Heaven.' What you think 'tis?"

The other began to cry.

"Let's go," she said.

The boy nodded. His face took on a look of deep thought. He put his piece of bread carefully away. Then he held out his hand.

"Come on."

They crept along the path, looking back fearfully lest they should be seen.

The sun scorched their faces and the road felt hot to their bare feet.

Once they met a cart, but they hid behind the bushes until it passed.

"They took her this way," said the boy. "I watched. This must be the road to Heaven, but I don't see anybody going."

"I'm tired," said the little girl suddenly, and sat down in the road.

The other was in despair.

He looked at her. Then he offered her the piece of bread. She began to cry.

"It's so far off," she said.

"I think 'tis pretty far away," said the boy. His courage began to fail.

"But we'll see her when we do get there. P'raps she'll come a little way to meet us."

So they went on, and by and bye the sun was hidden, and the stars came out, one by one, fastening themselves in the night sky.

The boy limped a little, but he did not complain.

They came suddenly upon a broad, shining stretch of water. The trees, clustering close to the edges, showed their sombre branches darkening the surface, but the moonlight falling on it made a clear, unbroken line of gold.

On the bank, in among the tall water weeds and heavy scented lilies, a boat was fastened.

The boy gave a cry of joy.

"Yonder's Heaven! See the light! That's like what they said, all bright. Somebody there's holding out a lantern to us. P'raps it's her. She used to hold one for me when father made me go out in the dark, 'at looked jus' like that. We're nearly there now."

"It's so dark here, I'm afraid," said the other, but the boy answered valiantly:

"I'll take care of you, I'm not afraid. It's right beyond the light, I know. I can nearly see her."

With an effort he drew the little girl into the boat and, leaning over, tugged at the rope. The rotten cord gave way, and the skiff, with a murmur like a happy sigh at its release, went forward.

The boy put his arm round the girl. The tangled mass of her hair swept his face, and her head fell upon his shoulder.

"I'll wake you when we get there," he said.

He looked down suddenly, for he felt his feet were wet. The bottom of the boat was full of water. He could not understand why.

"But it doesn't matter," he said. "We're almost there."

Just then there came, borne over the water from afar, the sound of music.

The boy held his breath to listen.

Upon the hill beyond there was a little church. Those within had prayed: "From sudden death, deliver us, good Lord."

Now they sang of joy, of hope, of eternal day.

The boy did not know. "It is Heaven," he said.

The water came very fast, but he did not notice it. His eyes were fixed upon the line of shimmering, golden light, and reaching beyond it and above the music's strains, it seemed to him he saw her face. He started forward with a little cry.

The water rushed up, carrying the boat under with a swift, gurgling noise.

Where it disappeared there remained only a stream of golden light.

And the sound of the voices was hushed.

S. L. BACON.

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THE SECRET THAT HE KNEW.

LONG after the speaker's words had died away the listening people waited in hushed expectancy, unwilling to believe that he had finished, and unable to descend all at once from the heights to which they had been raised. But the announcement of the last hymn assured them that the service was almost over, and a little later they began to file slowly out through the high, narrow doors into the damp air.

In almost total silence the crowd separated, with the unconsciousness of surroundings which comes to men when their minds have been stirred deeply.

John Ordway and his wife came from the chapel among the last, and walked arm in arm to where many carts and traps were waiting; both had been strongly moved by the evening's sermon, but in different ways, indicative perhaps of their widely differing temperaments.

Ordway helped his wife into the trap, the horse broke into a trot, and the driver leant forward to draw the rug more closely about his companion, peering up into her face solicitously.

"A damp night!" he murmured. "Do you feel at all cold, little girl?"

She started nervously at his voice, and shook her head.

"I'm quite warm enough," she said mechanically.

They moved swiftly past the scattered houses of the village, and out into a stretch of open country. Three or four times the woman raised her head as if about to speak, but checked herself with an effort.

"I have something to tell you, John," she said at last. "I—I am afraid I ought to have told you long ago."

Her tone was so serious that he turned and looked at her with quick anxiety.

"Are you sure you ought?" he asked gently. "Perhaps there ain't any need."

"There is a need," she answered. "I have known all along that it would be better to speak out, but somehow I never felt that I could until to-night."

She paused as though to gather courage. "It's about myself and Willis," she said. "You remember ——"

Ordway bent forward suddenly with a warning shout to the horse, and the cart jolted heavily in a deep rut.

"That's me all over," he said with a chuckle. "I took special notice of that hole so as to avoid it on the way home, and here I am, drivin' right into it again. That's what comes of listenin' to sermons ye can't quite understand."

"Won't you listen to me, John?" his wife asked pleadingly.

"Of course I will," he answered. "Only my nerves bein' so wrought up I'm sort of afraid to have any big shock come on me sudden, ye know."

"You make it so hard for me," she said, "and I am in earnest. Oh, truly, I am in earnest!"

Her voice trembled with the warning of tears. Ordway put his arms round her and drew her closer to him protectively, as a mother soothes a nervous, sleepy child.

"I wasn't joking," he said. "I'm always glad to listen to ye, only I think ye'd best wait till we get home. We're most there now."

The waggon swung a sharp turn, and then, far upon the hill ahead of them, the clear-cut buildings showed against the horizon.

"Go in by the fire," said John Ordway, when at length they rattled into the farmyard; "I'll follow when I've got the mare in."

But when he came back from the stable he found her waiting, leaning against one of the square posts of the porch, and looking out across the darkness of the valley.

"I wanted to wait until we could go in together," she said.

The long, low kitchen was full of changing shadows, which danced across the polished floor and lost themselves in the corners of the irregular ceiling, when Ordway crossed to the huge fireplace and piled some sticks of soft wood on the glowing ashes.

Then, throwing off his top coat, he dragged from the chimney corner a great, old-fashioned chair, and sank back luxuriously in its capacious depths.

His wife had also removed her wraps, and now took a seat at the other side of the fireplace on a low stool drawn back just within the wavering boundary of shadow.

At length she spoke, slowly and with evident effort at calmness.

"You must try to be patient with me," she said. "You'll be astonished, I know, and I am afraid you'll be angry—and I couldn't blame you—but I want you to wait till—till I've finished."

"Are you quite sure ye'd better begin, or hadn't ye better let it go till to-morrow?"

"No!" she said quickly. "I've wanted to speak—to speak so many times, and haven't dared to. I'll feel a thousand times happier when I've told you, no matter what happens. Let me go on now."

"P'r'aps I know what——" he began, but checked himself suddenly. "I'm listenin'," he added.

She hesitated as if to gain strength, and he marked how the slender figure quivered with the effort of her hurried breathing.

"I had promised to marry Willis before I met you," she said unsteadily. "We quarrelled about some little thing, and each was too proud to speak first. Finally, he went away without seeing me. You know how we heard that he died in Africa. I believed it—we all did—and I cried myself to sleep, night after night, because I hadn't acted differently. As time went on I began to forget little by little, and after a while it all seemed like a sort of dream; then you came into my life, and taught me to trust you and turn to you for help in everything. And, in truth I loved you more than you could ever understand." Her voice trembled pitifully.

"You believe me, John?" she added. "Say that you do believe me!"

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Ordway drew his hand across his eyes with an involuntary movement.

"I ain't never doubted it," he answered softly.

She gave a quick sigh of relief, and let her head sink again upon her breast as she continued:

"I was happy and contented for two long years. It was like Heaven; and you were happy, too, John!"

"Happy!" he said. "Ah, yes; nobody'll ever know how much."

"And then little Dora was born," she went on, "and somehow all our trouble began there, for it seemed as though her baby hands took hold of our hearts and pushed them apart. I actually thought that you didn't care about her—I knew it was wrong, but I thought it—and I got to feeling against you as I would against someone that was watching for a chance to hurt my little one. Well, things got worse and worse, and when she died I almost believed you were to blame in some way—I didn't know how. Oh, it's awful to think about, how I couldn't help feeling that way. Will you ever forgive me for it?"

"I never laid it up against ye," he answered. "It was natural, and I knew ye wasn't well; so I tried to forget all about that part of our life, and I've done it—almost."

She looked up at him gratefully. "You are trying to help me," she said. "Not many men would do that. The rest of my story is harder to tell, and harder to listen to. You remember that Willis came back and hunted me up. He came at the worst time for all of us. I was set against you, and half wild about baby's death, and reckless to everything. He found that out, and kept pleading with me and urging me to go away with him. Day after day, when you were at work, he used to come to the house and talk to me—always in the same strain. I ought to have sent him away, but—I didn't. His sympathy was so ready that I didn't see the purpose nor the falseness of it. It was as though some evil spirit put the words into his mouth, and I listened; Heaven help me, I listened."

She started to her feet, and stood facing her husband, her arms raised to her head in a wild gesture.

"It was no fault of mine that I did not sin against you in deed as I did in thought," she cried. "If it had not been for some accident—I don't even know what it was—I should not have been here now.

"I went to meet him one night. We were to drive to Oakley and take the train for some place. I waited I don't know how many hours, but he didn't come; at last I crept home, and found you asleep. All night I sat by the fire waiting for some word from him, for I was ready to go—yes, even then I was ready to go.

"In the morning, when you were away, a letter came saying that an unforseen accident had happened, and he would let me know about it soon. I never heard from him again."

She paused, and looked at him fearfully, as though expecting a violent outburst of anger, but he said nothing, and at last she spoke again, unable to bear the silence.

"Won't you speak to me?" she cried tremulously. "Haven't you been listening? Have I done wrong to you? Speak to me, for Heaven's sake; I can't bear it!"

The words were lost in a storm of sobbing, and she threw herself down on her knees beside him, hiding her face with her hands on the arm of the old-fashioned chair. Ordway looked down at her through eyes that were dimming.

"Don't take on so, Eunie," he said gently. "Ye'll be glad all the rest of yer life, I think, on account of jest what ye're cryin' about now. Look up, my gurl, an' p'r'aps I can finish the story for ye."

He put out his hand, and stroked the bowed head with clumsy tenderness.

"Ye say ye never knowed why he didn't come that night," he said. "I could a told ye why."

She raised her head with a startled exclamation.

"You?" she cried.

"Yes," he answered, "me! He stayed away because I told him he'd better; and he knowed I meant what I said."

Her eyes grew full of wondering fear, and she shrank away from him; but he smiled again, and detained her with gentle force.

"Wait," he said. "I ain't crazy. Did ye think I was so blind all them months that I didn't see what was happenin'? I'd a knowed if I'd been miles away, for there aint never any trouble in your heart but what I don't feel it. Lord bless ye, I seen what was goin' on, but I thought 'twas best to say nothin', an' let ye wrestle it out alone. Finally, when I noticed that circumstance an' everything was likely to be too much for ye, why, I stepped in an' talked to Willis. He understood, an' that settled it."

"Then you've known?" she interrupted breathlessly. "You've known all this time?"

He nodded cheerfully.

"All this time," he answered.

"But you never said a word to me—you never acted as though——"

"It's always harder for me to talk than to keep still," he said slowly. "Surely you've found that out long ago. I couldn't a said a word without makin' things worse, most likely; so I thought the best thing to do was to jest wait—an' I been waitin'."

"Waiting?" she responded. "Waiting for what?"

"For what's happened, Eunie," he said softly. "Waitin' to hear jest what I've heard to-night; to have ye kneel down here beside me as ye're kneelin' now, a-wantin' the help I can give ye, an' a-trustin' me enough to ask for it."

He lifted his hand to check her question, and went on in the same tone:

"I ain't never been like any of the men ye used to know. Why, for a year or more after we were married, I used to set an' watch ye, wonderin' all the time whether it was really me, an' whether my luck wasn't too good to be true. I was always afraid that there was a mistake somewheres, for it didn't seem right nor natural that ye should see anything in me to care about, unless—unless it was because I cared so much for you; I tried to think that sometimes."

The woman was clinging to his arm, and weeping convulsively.

"'Tweren't your fault, little girl," he said. "It jest happened that way. There ain't no need to cry about it now; the time for cryin's all gone past, an' I don't think it'll ever come again."

He stopped abruptly, as though half ashamed of his sudden outburst, and let his glance rest lovingly upon the kneeling figure at his feet.

"Ain't ye glad it's happened?" he asked. "Surely ye ain't grievin' over the very thing that is to make us so happy agen?"

She did not answer, and for a moment he watched her in perplexed anxiety. Then he understood, and knelt down by her side.

ETHEL N.

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BY
GEORGE
GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SECOND VICTIM.

WHEN they got into the saloon her ladyship turned to Lorrain and looked at him for a few moments in silence, and he, looking back into her eyes, read in them a curious mixture of undisguised fear and equally undisguised admiration, of submission blended with half defiance, and of resignation tempered with an eager expectation. Many a time and oft he had looked into woman's eyes, usually to find what he wanted and expected in them, but never in all his experience in reading that most puzzling of all riddles, a woman's mind, had he seen so many contradictory reflections chasing each other across the surface of the limpid mirror which seems to lie under the surface of a woman's eyes.

She was utterly in his power and at his mercy, and she knew it. She had more than a suspicion that he had made it quite certain that she should never see her husband again—that, indeed, she might already be a widow. Yet, woman as she was, it was utterly impossible that she could have lived in company with these two men through the experiences of the last few days without making comparisons to her husband's disadvantage, and even at the worst—well, that she had already learnt to contemplate with a something more than calmness. Nor was the prospect altogether unpleasant, for, however much further it might have taken her on her downward course, the fact remained undeniable and inevitable, that, whatever she might once have thought of her feelings towards her husband, they were as milk and water to strong wine in comparison with those with which this splendid and masterly scoundrel had inspired her—for splendid he certainly was in her eyes, both physically and mentally, pitiless and utterly without scruple, as she already knew him to be.

And then, behind all, there was a lurking ambition prompting her to think that though she might begin by being this man's slave, she might end by being his queen—and with gold illimitable to share between them, the mistress of such a master of men as Francisco Lorrain would be no mean power in the world.

At last, with an effort that was plainly and satisfactorily visible to him, she took her eyes from his and looked rapidly round the saloon.

"I think you had better see that there is no one here, and that the doors are locked. A third spectator of the—well, the experiment, might be rather inconvenient," she said in a low, rapid tone that was little more than a whisper. His eyebrows lifted in momentary surprise, but he said nothing. He went to the two doors leading to the saloon from the main deck and shut and locked them, and then he looked at the companion stairs and said with a laugh:

"No, I'm afraid that's no use. To make things quite secure we should have to close the companion-hatch, and I'm afraid that would look uncomfortably suspicious. Perhaps your ladyship will honour my own room for the purpose of the experiment. There there would not be the slightest fear of interruption."

"Very well," she said, "perhaps that would be better."

Then she moved towards the door of the splendidly furnished stateroom, half library, half drawing-room, which Lorrain had placed at the disposal of herself and her husband since leaving Barbadoes.

"But, excuse me," he said, "haven't you forgotten——?"

"What?" she said with a smile. "*That?* Oh no, señor. I don't leave it anywhere where an accident might lead someone to find it. I am going to trust *you* absolutely, first because I wish to do so; and second, because, under the circumstances, I must. But I don't propose to trust anybody else."

By this time they were both in the stateroom and Lorrain had locked the door. She put her hands up to her head, unpinned the little white yachting cap that she wore, and then pulled what he at first thought was a dagger hair-pin out of the thick coils of her hair.

"There! That is it," she said, holding it up by the point before him. "That is the compass that will point our way to El Dorado. Wait a moment and you shall see for yourself."

She took a reel of thin cotton out of her pocket, broke off a piece about two feet long, threaded it through a tiny hole in the middle of the Magnet, and tied a knot in one end.

"Now," she said, "if you have a little gold in your pocket, put it on the table, or your watch and chain will do quite as well."

While he was taking them off, her ladyship went to the door, and then, holding the suspended Magnet at arm's length, walked towards the table. As she approached it, the needle shivered and wavered. Then the brilliant point swung round for a moment towards the watch and chain, and then, when she had got close to the table, instead of fastening itself on to the gold, as it had done to her own watch and chain on that fatal night in Bedford Square, it swung past them, dipped at a sharp angle, and pointed down over the edge of the table towards the floor.

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"*Sangre de Dios!*" cried Lorrain, for the moment startled out of his self-possession. "What is the infernal thing doing?"

"Only reminding you that you have got a very considerable quantity of gold stowed away somewhere under the floor of this cabin," said her ladyship, laughing again, as she pulled the Magnet back. Then, holding it in her two hands behind her, she faced him and said:

"Well, Señor Lorrain, are you satisfied? Has it not already discovered one hidden treasure? Curious, isn't it, that I should have been in this room so often with this thing in my possession, and yet never known that I was walking about over your strong-room."

"It is miraculous, almost devilish!" he said, with something very like a touch of awe in his voice. "Well, yes I confess that I have a few thousand pounds in a box down there. One can't run a yacht for nothing, you know, and it takes gold to find gold. May I look at it?"

He held out his hand, but she drew back a step and said:

"I am going to trust you, as I said, absolutely, but first I want you to promise me on your honour, I won't say as a gentleman, for that is only a conventionalism, but as a man to a woman who is trusting herself body and soul to his keeping—for that I suppose is what this business means now—that you will never attempt to take it out of my possession. You may think it silly of me to ask such a thing, because, of course, I am so completely in your hands that you could take it from me by force if you liked, but you can afford to gratify a woman's whim in a thing like this."

"I hold but few things sacred, as you know," he answered, taking a step towards her, "but if I swear to you by my hatred of the man who has some day to pay for Patricia's life, then you will believe me. Is not that so?"

"Yes," she said, "I think I can believe that, for if there is anything like what they call Fate, and you broke an oath like that, the revenge might pass the other way. There it is!" and she held the Magnet out towards him on her open palm.

He looked at it closely for a few moments without touching it. Then he picked it up, drew the thread out of the eyehole and said quietly:

"Yes, it is very wonderful, and very beautiful, too; and therefore it could have no better possessor than its present one. And now, as a token of my good faith, let me put it back into its place."

She looked up at him for an instant with a smile that would have set a much colder man's blood on fire, and then, with a pretty gesture, she turned the back of her dainty, proudly poised head with its wealth of thickly coiled hair towards him. He slipped the Magnet back into its place with a touch almost as deft as her own, and then, flinging even the pretence of reserve to the winds, he said in just such a voice as he had spoken to her in on the bridge during the fight:

"There now, you have it back, but I have it still for I have you, *Jessica mia*, and, *Madre de Dios*, I will keep you both, while I have life and strength to hold you!"

She turned swiftly, as though she would have escaped from his arms, but she was too late, for they were already round her in such an embrace as she had never felt before. She had turned her face upward at the moment. The next his lips were on hers, and the next she had forgotten everything save that she was in the arms of the man she loved.

While this scene was being enacted on board the *Minnehaha* a very different one was taking place in one of the old dungeons in the foundations of the citadel of Santo Domingo. There, on a stone bench, fastened to the wall by a chain locked on to a rusty iron band round his waist, sat the man who was fated to be the second of the victims

Don Gregorio entered, followed by two disreputable soldiers.

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whom the deadly glitter of the Gold Magnet was to lure to their doom.

Lorrain had spoken something less than the truth when he had told her ladyship that her husband was perfectly safe and every possible care would be taken of him. He had been taken ashore drugged, and when he had come to his senses he had found himself in as hopeless a plight as any other of the hundreds of luckless wretches who had found that old Spanish cell the ante-room to another world.

How long he had been chained up thus like a wild animal to the wall, he had no notion. There was just a blank of silence and darkness behind him, separating him from the moment at which he had gone to sleep in his berth on board the yacht. It might be only a few hours ago, it might be weeks for all he knew, and his cell door had opened and Don Gregorio entered, followed by two disreputable soldiers of the republic, one of whom carried a smoky old oil-lamp and the other of whom shut the door and put his back against it as soon as they were in.

His head was aching horribly, and an almost intolerable pain shot through his eyes as he blinked at the light. Still he managed to look up at Don Gregorio and say with something like firmness in his voice:

"Well, sir, have you come to explain this abominable outrage on one of Her Majesty's subjects, or have you come to put an end to me in accordance with the orders of that adulterous scoundrel, your friend Lorrain?"

"Gently! gently! *muy señor mio*," replied the Don, who spoke a curious but quite understandable mixture of idioms which he was pleased to consider excellent English. "Yes. It regrets me much to say that it necessitates for you to leave the world. You see you have the misfortune to be in the *camino*—I mean the road, the way, of the honourable Don Francisco, who is my friend and my father and benefactor, and who has given my country back to me, and those who are in the road of Don Francisco always go out of it. No, I have never known one that stayed in it. You are in it, so you must go. It is pity, it is misfortune, very much misfortune for you who is an honourable gentleman, so it is. It necessitates, so that is all. We do not hate you. We have not what you call grudge for you, we respect you, and we are very sorry for you, but you must go. You have seen too much and you know too much, and moreover it is your misfortune to possess a most adorable señora who has found favour in the eyes of Don Francisco. Is not this enough? Can you not see that it necessitates?"

As he said this, Don Gregorio spread out his fat, dirty hands with an apologetic gesture and leant forward and stared with something very like commiseration in his big brown eyes at his prisoner.

Langton Harley was not a man who could be called brave if compared with such men as Leigh Tristam or Lorrain, but he was an Englishman, and an Englishman is usually at his best with his back to the wall. And so it was with Don Gregorio's prisoner. He answered his gaoler not only coolly but contemptuously.

"I see," he said. "Your friend Lorrain has stolen my wife and put you back into a position to rob these wretched niggers, and in return for this service you are to make it possible, by murdering me, for him to marry my widow legally if he chooses. I am in the way and it's necessary, as you say, for me to get out of it, at least from your point of view. You'll perhaps excuse me if I don't see it in exactly the same light. Now, look here, Don Gregorio, you are an infernal scoundrel and I'm absolutely in your power. Therefore I know that it wouldn't be the slightest use trying to make a bargain with you. But if I've got to get out of the world I should like to tell you something of very considerable importance to yourself before I go. Give me a drink of something and sit down. I suppose you are not in a hurry for a few minutes?"

Don Gregorio stared at his captive in wondering admiration. The old Pendril blood in Langton Harley's veins had risen to the occasion, and completely transformed the man. Don Gregorio knew that he himself in such a position would by this time have been cowering and cringing on the floor, begging for his life, and whining like a whipped dog, and here was this Englishman sitting chained, and face to face with death, talking about his own murder as quietly as if it had been some ordinary business transaction.

"Ach!" he said. "The señor is reasonable, as all his wonderful people are. José, go and bring a bottle of wine of my own private best immediately, with glasses. This we will set aside for the present."

"What is that?" said Harley, as he took a small wine-bottle half full out of his pocket, and set it down on the stone seat.

"That?" said Don Gregorio with an apologetic smile. "Well, it is the truth that that is the señor's passport to another and, we will hope, a better and more fortunate world. It has no pain, and it is certain. When the time comes he will drink it. He will sleep and dream fair dreams, but he will not wake. That is all. It is better than to die in darkness of thirst and hunger, is it not, señor?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it is," replied Harley, with just a little catch in his voice as he looked round at the bottle which contained his own death. But the next instant his pride came to his rescue again, and he went on as quietly as ever:

"It was really quite kind of you to provide such a happy dispatch for me. I should have thought something lingering and humorous would have been more in your line. However, you mustn't think me ungrateful, and you shan't find me so, for now, Don Gregorio, I, your captive, whom you have got chained to this wall like a dog, and whom you are going to do the greatest of all injuries to, am going to make it possible for you to be one of the richest men, if not indeed the richest man, in the world."

"Eh? What is that, señor, that you say?" said Don Gregorio, coming forward and sitting down beside him, and laying his hand on his shoulder with an almost caressing gesture, from which Harley shrank with a little shudder—the first during the interview. "What is that? The richest man on earth! You will tell me how to be that, and not even ask your life in return?—though, mind you, I could not give it you, no, not for all the money in the world, for Don Francisco is coming here to-night to see, and if he finds you have not gone to meet the blessed saints in Heaven, well, he will kill me with those infernal guns of his, for he has sworn it, and when Don Francisco swears a thing it is done already. But come, here is the wine. Let us drink and be friends while you remain here."

The soldier came back with a magnum of champagne and two tumblers, and when Don Gregorio had opened the bottle and offered him a tumblerful with the politest of gestures, Harley took it thankfully, for physically, if not morally, he needed a stimulant very badly. He half emptied the tumbler at a gulp, and then Don Gregorio said when he had done the same:

"And now, *muy amigo mio*, what is the story that you would tell me? I am all eagernesss to listen."

"Yes, I dare say you are," said Harley, edging away from him as far as his chain would permit, and turning half round towards him with his shoulder against the wall. "It is just the sort of story that a man like you would like to hear, and yet it is probable that before very long you'll wish to Heaven you'd never heard it. Do you know what your friend Lorrain has come here for?"

"Oh, on some what you call goose's chase, to hunt for buried treasures that we have many stories about in this island, but never seen since the days of the old Spaniards."

"You're wrong there, Don Gregorio, he hasn't come to *look* for them, he's come to *find* them. You may not believe me, but you can find out for yourself in a few days that what I am going to tell you is absolute fact. That woman who was my wife has got in her possession a magnet, a sort of

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compass needle, you understand, which is attracted to gold and other precious metals in the same way that a magnetised needle is attracted to iron. She wears it in her hair, where you may look for it if you get a chance. Lorrain knows she has it and that is one reason why I am here and she is with him on board the yacht. In a day or two they are going, as you know, up the Oyama to locate a chest full of gold and jewels which was buried under the river-bed by one of the old Governors of this place. They will hang this needle on a thread and they will walk along the river-bank, and when they come to the place, the needle will point straight down at the gold, no matter how deep it is buried. Then they will mark the place and go back and dig it up and, if you allow them, take it away in the yacht. Then they will go to one of the Cays of the Bahamas where there is the wreck of one of the old Spanish treasure-ships, no doubt loaded with gold and silver, and the Magnet will find that for them, and in all probability the *Minnehaha* will go back to England simply loaded with treasure. Do you follow me, Don Gregorio?"

"*Ach mira, mira!* If I follow?" cried the little Don in a voice trembling with excitement. "*Sangre de Dios!* it is marvellous, wonderful, unbelievable, but is it true, señor? Can such a thing be, and has the señora who was your wife really got it? Why, if one had such a thing one might find all the gold that is hidden in the world and be rich, ah rich, so rich that one need not go to these ever-damnable money-lenders of Europe to borrow a little money to support the work of the State. *Ei carramba!* what a thing to have!"

Harley smiled as he said this, and he looked at him and saw his eyes alight, his face flushed, and his whole body trembling with the lust of greed. It was evident that Lorrain would not have sent him to his death unavenged.

"Yes," he said, "a wonderful thing as you say, and you have only to have Lorrain and her ladyship discreetly watched when they go up the river, to convince yourself that it is literally and absolutely true that they've got it. Whether they take it out of the island again or not is your look out.

"But, mind you, Don Gregorio, I have not told you this for friendship. I have told you as a sort of revenge in advance for my own murder. You will find that there is a curse upon that thing. My own father, one of the most honoured and honourable men in England, dishonoured himself by stealing it from the man who invented it. That man was his oldest friend, and he died just as he had finished showing it to him. My father died a few days later. The woman who was my wife stole it from him. I married her because she had it, knowing it was stolen, and so I deserve what is going to happen to me. Now, here I am you see, chained to this wall, with half a bottle of poison beside me, which I am going to drink to escape being starved to death.

"Henceforth you are no longer Lorrain's friend. You are the worst enemy he has on earth, and he is yours. He should have poisoned me himself on board the yacht, and not sent me here to tell you this. It is one of those mistakes that the cleverest of men make, and I think he will pay for it. I wonder which of you will die first in the fight for it?

"But, mind you, don't forget that if you kill him and get it, someone else will most assuredly kill you, and I think I can tell you who it will be—and that is a man named Leigh Tristam. Remember the name carefully. He is married to the daughter of the man who made this infernal thing. He knows it has been stolen, and he knows about that treasure-ship I was telling you of. He is fitting out a yacht, in fact I dare say she's on her way now to find it. He must hear of the *Minnehaha* and Don Christobal's treasure chest. By-the-way, he also knows about that. He will put two and two together and will have little difficulty in guessing that someone on the yacht must have had the Gold Magnet, and and that that somebody must be the woman who was my wife. Then he will come, and Heaven help your friend Lorrain when he does come, or you if you've got the Magnet by then!

"Well, Don Gregorio, that is all, and now, as I don't care about having any more of your company than I can help, I may as well say good-bye."

Don Gregorio sat with staring eyes and open mouth and quick panting breath, and watched him as he uncorked the bottle and quietly poured the fatal draught into the tumbler that he had drunk the champagne from. As he raised it to his lips he looked steadily at him, and said with a savage sort of smile:

"If what you have told me about this is true, you will not leave the world quite as comfortably as I do. I can imagine what your friend Lorrain will do when he finds that you want to steal the Gold Magnet. It will be nothing less than crucifixion or impalement, and he will stand by and watch you die by bits I expect. Here's to you!"

The next moment he had swallowed the poisoned wine at a gulp, just as Don Gregorio, with a cry of rage, was about to spring at him to snatch it away from him. With the last voluntary effort of his life, Langton flung the glass full in his bloated face, and as his eyes grew dim under the almost instantaneous influence of the potent drug, he saw the glass break, as it seemed, in little splashes of blood. Then his head dropped forward on his breast, his body swayed to and fro, and then sank on the stone bench never to move again.

And so died the second of the Gold Magnet's victims, a death better and braver than the life he had lived.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WELCOME ALLY.

NEARLY three weeks before these events had taken place in Santa Domingo, Leigh Tristram, almost on the eve of his marriage, had heard of a yacht which had been brought home from Monte Carlo by a youthful plunger who had got through some hundred thousand pounds inside two months and, as the advertisement said, "had no further use for her." The vessel was lying at Southampton, and as he thought the description looked likely he ran down to see her. The first inspection proved so far satisfactory that he entered into negotiations with the agents for the hiring of her for six months. But within a few hours these negotiations were broken off in a somewhat unexpected fashion.

It was a lovely evening with a fine, steady breeze blowing straight across the water and therefore just perfect for sailing. Tristram, like most of his adventurous kind, was seldom happier than when he was sitting in the stern sheets of a good boat with the tiller in one hand and the slack of the main sheet in the other, slipping along with a nice leading wind; so as his business was over for the day and the water looked so inviting, he hired a smart-looking, cutter-rigged craft and, taking the owner with him to look after the fore-sheets, he started off for a run down to the Solent.

As they were running across from Hurst Point to Cowes, Tristam's experienced eye singled out from among the crowd of yachts and pleasure-craft a vessel which struck him as being neither yacht nor man-of-war, and yet possessing most of the characteristics of both. She carried guns, or, at any rate, she was fitted for them, and her stem had the outward curve which betokened the possession of a ram, but she had no fighting tops, and her mast and rigging were those of a large yacht rigged as a three-masted schooner. Then again, although the Stars and Stripes were floating from the flagstaff on her taffrail, she carried at her main the pennant of the Columbian Yacht Club, a decoration which no man-of-war of any country could possibly carry. Tristam looked at her, wondering what manner of craft she could be, until his boat had got within a couple of hundred yards of her, and then he said to his boatman:

"Do you happen to know what that craft is? I can't make out whether she's a yacht, a man-of-war, or what. She can't be a United States warship and fly the Columbian Yacht Club pennant, and yachts don't generally carry the armament of a second-class cruiser as she seems to do."

The boatman smiled solemnly, after the manner of his class, and said:

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"Well, sir, from all they say of her, she's a bit of both. She is called the *Pockawantus*, or some name of that sort. Yankee, I believe it is; anyhow, her owner's a Yank, a very rich young man I'm told, and very free with his dollars. His name's Cortland I believe."

"What! Cecil Cortland?" said Tristam. "Do you know if that's his other name?"

"Well, sir, I can't say that I do, but it might be, you know," replied the boatman in a non-committal sort of way.

"Anyhow, I'll see if it is," said Tristam. "We'll go round and run alongside on the other tack, and I'll leave a card. If the owner's name is Cecil Cortland, I ought to know him."

As the boat went round and ran up towards the formidable-looking yacht, Tristam's mind went back to the day, some two years before, when he and this same Cecil Cortland had been travelling back together from Cuzco to Sicuani, the terminus of the Southern Railway of Peru, twelve thousand feet up among the valleys of the Andes. They had got into a very tight place, in a little gorge where a tributary torrent of the Urubamba is crossed by a stone bridge, about four miles from Cusipati, the only township boasting an inn in all the hundred and twelve miles from the City of the Sun to the railway.

They had been held up here by a dozen disbanded soldiers, for it was just after the Revolution, and a good many of the Presidential troops, dissatisfied with an honorarium of about six shillings for an eight months' campaign, had taken their rifles and ammunition and gone out on the road to collect arrears of pay from the owners of isolated haciendas, and unsuspecting travellers by the wayside. They had spent a very busy half-hour together, and when it was over they were both wounded, Tristam slightly, and Cortland rather badly, but they had laid out seven of their assailants, pitched one over the bridge into the torrent, and so far impressed the others with the danger of the enterprise that they had thrown away their rifles and taken to their heels.

They had made acquaintances casually in the train coming up from Arequipa, and they had ridden together to Cuzco and Yucay. Just chance travelling acquaintances, so far, and then this little adventure had come and made them friends for life, for there is no more reliable basis for friendship than the getting into deadly peril, and the getting out of it again in virtue of each other's pluck and nerve. Tristam had carried Cortland on his own mule into Cusipati, and had nursed him till his wound had healed and he was strong enough to get back to the coast, and at Mollendo they parted, Cortland to go north to San Francisco, and Tristam south to Valparaiso.

"Is Mr. Cecil Cortland on board?" he said, as the boat ran alongside, and his man got hold of the gangway chain.

"He is, sir," said the gangway man with a smart salute that betokened a certain amount of drill.

"That's so," said a familiar voice from the top of the gangway. "I thought it was you, Tristam. Saw you through the glasses as you came alongside. Come right on board and let's know what good wind has brought you alongside the *Pocahontas*."

The next minute Tristam was on the deck of the yacht heartily shaking hands with as good a specimen of the American gentleman—than whom there is no better fellow on the face of the earth—as any man could wish to call friend. He was about Tristam's own age and height, rather more slightly built, but well set up, hard and bronzed, with clear, steady grey eyes, curling brown hair and a close-cut, point beard with little streaks of gold in it.

"Come along to my room and have a cocktail, and let's swop lies a bit. No flattery, but this is the nicest surprise I've had this side yet. What do you think of my new yacht?"

"Yacht?" said Tristam, stopping and looking about him. "Your new cruiser, I should say. Why, you've got your guns mounted and everything. What are you going to do with her? Make a patriotic present of her to Uncle Sam, or go and help the Cubans?"

"Neither," he said. "I guess Uncle Sam's navy 'll be able to struggle along without the *Pocahontas* for the present, and as for Cuba, well, I don't go much on American newspapers, and I'm not going to help those greasers to make another Hayti out of Cuba. Spaniards may be bad enough, but they're gentlemen along side half-bred greasers any day. Walk right in," he went on, as he stopped before the open door of a cosy looking state-room under the navigating bridge. "This is my particular den. Of course, in a ship like this most of the rooms are under the main-deck covered with three inches of steel in case of accident, just to keep the rain out, you know."

"Well, now," said Tristram, when he had thrown himself into a luxurious armchair and lit the cigar which his host had offered him, "I want to know about this ship. How long have you been a millionaire, and what sort of a freak made you buy a man-of-war for a yacht?"

"Well, as to the millionaire first," said Cortland when he had got his own cigar under way, "when I got back to San Francisco after that little scrap with the greasers up in the hills, I found that the old man had struck it very rich in a wheat deal. Meanwhile one of his brothers who owned half the coal in Washington State had died and left me every cent of money and every bit of real estate he had. Then six months after I got back the old man himself went home with influenza and pneumonia, and as I was his only child I got all his, too, and the result is that I've got more dollars than I just know what to do with. I came over here to buy a yacht and couldn't find one I liked. Then I saw in the papers that the King of Assam on some place out east there had had a yacht built for him up at Elswick, which was a good deal more of a fast cruiser than a yacht, and couldn't raise the loan that was to pay for it.

"Well, the notion seemed to strike me, so I went up and had a look at her. I didn't know of any laws that stood in the way of an American citizen having guns on his yacht if he liked, so long as he kept out of the pirate business, and I didn't see why I shouldn't have a cruiser for a yacht if I wanted to, just the same as the Kaiser and the Tsar, and so as I liked the craft when I saw her, and it was just a matter of dollars, well, here she is, guns, ammunition, and all. She is a very comfortable boat, and as His Majesty was dead nuts on speed, we can get over thirty knots an hour out of her at a squeeze.

"I'll tell you she's a daisy to go. The other day one of your big cruisers, the *Terrible*, went for a full-speed spin in the Channel, so I got up full head of steam and started out after her, and when we came back that evening, her skipper was the maddest man in the British Navy. I shouldn't wonder if I went mighty near causing a war between the two countries, for he must have been just aching to blow the *Pocahontas* out of the water when he saw us come creeping up and then edge away ahead of him when his big ship was doing all her twenty-two knots. Yes, she's a smart craft, I can tell you, and if she ever got into a fight I reckon she'd give a very good account of herself. And now, it's your turn. What have you been doing since? What brought you down here?"

"I'm on the same errand that took you to Elswick," replied Tristam, "except that I'm not rich enough to buy a yacht. I came down to see if I could hire one for a few months. The fact is, I'm going to get married in a day or two, and we are going to spend the honeymoon on a treasure-hunt in the Bahamas. That's what we want the yacht for."

"Well, I guess that sounds a bit interesting," said Cortland, leaning back in his chair and blowing a perpendicular stream of smoke up towards the roof of the state-room. "A marriage, honeymoon, and a treasure-hunt! That is about one of the spiciest combinations I've heard of for some time. But look here, señor, you've got to just shut down right away on that yacht-hiring business. If you want a yacht,

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here you are on board of one. The guests I brought over from the States in the one I chartered to come here are scattered all over Europe by this time. I have no engagements, no plans, and, though I'm not in need of the dust exactly, I'd sooner go treasure-hunting just now than anything else."

"But my dear fellow——"

"Now look here, Leigh Tristam, you can't stop right there. I know what you're going to say. Trespassing on my kindness, and all that sort of thing, but you'll oblige me by saying something else. If you've forgotten the fact that I owe my life to you, I haven't. You've got a big debt up against me, and one that you'll never collect this side of Kingdom Come, but I've got a chance here to pay off an instalment of it, even if it's only a little one, and I'm not going to let it go; so before you go out of this room you've got to give me the word of the man who stood beside me that night on the Urubamba, that you'll not cross the Atlantic in any other boat than this, and that you're going to give me the pleasure of your own society, and that of the Mrs. Leigh Tristam that is to be, on the trip. See?"

While he had been speaking, Tristam had been thinking, and when he had done, he said, beginning to speak more seriously than Cortland thought the circumstances warranted:

"That's very kind indeed of you, Cortland, very kind, and I am quite sure that the Mrs. Leigh Tristam that is to be, will accept your offer just as heartily as I do, only——"

"We don't wan't any 'onlys' in it," Cortland interrupted, with a wave of the hand in which he held the cigar. "You've said quite enough, and all you've got to do now is to go and get married, and send me word when the trip begins. No, take those cocktails away, George," he went on addressing the steward, who had just come to the door of the state-room. "Take them away and bring me a bottle of the best wine there is on board the ship."

The steward vanished, and presently re-appeared with a bottle of champagne in a bucket of ice. Meanwhile, Tristam, taking up his parable again, said:

"My dear fellow, I should not be doing the right thing if I accepted your invitation without telling you all there is behind it, and as there is a good deal that may interest you, you may as well have it, and if you are still in the same mind when you've heard it, then the matter is settled."

"Which means that it is settled anyway; so now here's the wine, let's take a drink and then we'll have the yarn. I know you don't talk unless it's worth listening to."

"Well, it is just this way," said Tristam—and then he went on and told Cortland the whole story of the Gold Magnet as far as his own knowledge took him, beginning with the death of Arthur Pendril on the banks of the Ozama, and ending with the departure of Sir Langton and Lady Harley Pendril for the West Indies.

"And now," he said, when he had finished the narration to which Cortland had listened with even more interest than he might have expected, "you see it is not only a honeymoon trip. I have come to the conclusion that, by whatever means it got there, the Gold Magnet is in their possession. A thing like that cannot have disappeared utterly without deliberate design on the part of someone, and I've employed what the logicians call the process of exhaustion to the case, and I've come to the conclusion that the only living human being who is likely to have possession of that Thing is the late Sir Langton Harley's son.

"Of course, I haven't even suggested to Muriel that Professor Harley stole it, simply because his daughter Gwynneth is her greatest friend. You'll meet her, because I am going to make it one condition of our accepting your invitation that you shall be my best man at the wedding, and so I had better caution you to begin with. Still no one can have got it out of Earnest Stevens' possession except Professor Harley, and if he had it, it isn't likely that anyone can have got it from him except his son, therefore I think I am justified in concluding that the Gold Magnet has gone to the West Indies and is going to be used in the discovery of Don Christobal's treasure-chest, and I'm going to find them and it. Then the matter is complicated with that Francisco Lorrain——"

"Hold there a moment," exclaimed Cortland, jumping to his feet. "Francisco Lorrain! That's the chap you were telling me about in Peru. Well, I've heard about him since. I had a cable about a fortnight ago from Barbadoes telling me that he'd bought a yacht there, a very fast craft that I wanted myself, called the *Minnehaha*, a holy terror of a ship. A cousin of mine, Vansuyler, fitted her out to go and help the Cubans. You see I was interested in the estate, and when I heard he'd gone under with fever at Cartagena I wrote instructing the agent to buy the yacht for me, and the answer was that she'd already been sold to Lorrain.

"Well now, that looks like sport. You can't go hunting Lorrain in a common yacht. You might as well try and chase a cruiser in a tug-boat. This is the craft that is wanted for that kind of work, and you are just coming right along in her as soon as you're hitched up, so that's settled. Bet your life they're on the *Minnehaha* with Lorrain, and that the Gold Magnet is there too, whichever of them's got it. Yes, I'll be your best man with pleasure if you don't have any speeches at the breakfast, and then Westward Ho! By the great Cæsar's ghost, old man, it was a good wind that brought you alongside this evening. I was just wondering what on earth I was going to do with this craft now I got her, and here you come along with a sample of just the very sort of work she is fitted for. She's yours to command, and so am I till you've seen this business out. Shake!"

(To be continued.)

A SUPERB ENGRAVING

Is given away free with this week's SUNDAY READER, and you should not fail to secure a copy, for the presentation plate alone is worth three times the cost of the entire paper. This picture, which is by one of the leading painters of the day, represents Christ as a boy, sitting in the midst of the doctors at Jerusalem. It is a magnificent conception, splendidly executed, and the engraving given away with THE SUNDAY READER is well worth framing.

The New Year's number of THE SUNDAY READER is only one penny. Here are some of the contents: "Playing Instruments Three Thousand Years Old," "Men who Lived Before the Flood," "A Clergyman who is a Gipsy," "Dogs that Wear Medals," "A Barefooted Bridesmaid," "The Most Religious House;" a remarkable building in which six distinct religious works are carried on; "Business Men at Prayer-meetings," "Cockroaches as Preachers," "The Largest Church Organ in the World," "Buying a Bible with a Forged Cheque," and two complete stories, together with a long instalment of a serial.

The children's page is now a feature of THE SUNDAY READER. There are stories, pictures, puzzles, anecdotes, and competitions, all for the little ones, and every mother should purchase a copy of THE SUNDAY READER for her children to read on Sunday afternoons.

Every Thursday. THE SUNDAY READER. *One Penny.*

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A YOUNG HERO AT CHILLIANWALLAH.

IN the grounds of Chelsea Hospital, where it is regarded with glistening eyes by the old pensioners, and arouses the patriotic feelings of many of the visitors who stroll about the spacious grounds in summer, stands a monument to the brave officers and men who fell in the deadly battle of Chillianwallah, one of the engagements in the war against the Sikhs in 1849.

The battle was fought under tremendous difficulties, and the cost in lives to the British was very heavy for the advantage gained; but in this, as in so many other cases, the dark side of the picture is relieved by the examples or conspicuous gallantry on the part of our men—and, I may add, our boys.

The battle began about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 13th of January. The ground on which it was fought was covered for miles in every direction with jungle of thick, high brushwood; the Sikh army, under Shere Sing, a noted warrior, was formed in order of battle in the centre of this jungle. The position of the enemy was in the midst of steep, precipitous and deep ravines; in addition they had earthworks mounted with cannon.

At the word of command the men went forward steadily, although exposed to a murderous fire. On the right flank our brigade of cavalry was thrown into confusion by some erroneous order and suffered considerably; while a native regiment was so fiercely attacked by the Sikhs and had to make so many formations to repel the ferocious enemy, that it finally charged with the rear rank in front! But onward went the brigade of infantry, and soon issued from the jungle into an opening where they had the opportunity of a bayonet charge.

"Charge!"

The order rang out clearly, and the men needed no second bidding. In grand order and with irresistible force, our gallant fellows dashed up to the enemy's line; the Sikhs poured in a last volley, broke and fled. It was useless to pursue them in the jungle; our men therefore turned their attention to the wounded, and settled accounts with the wounded Sikhs who were propping themselves up as best they could in order to shoot at our officers.

In another part of the battle, the 24th Regiment attacked a strong point on the enemy's position. They were all young men, but when Colonel Brooks waved his sword in the direction of the Khalsa guns, they responded with a British cheer, and went over the intervening six hundred yards at the double. The men were breathless when they reached the guns, but with the blood rushing through their veins, and their faces grim with determination, they swept away the gunners and spiked the guns.

In the midst of this operation they were fired on by some of the enemy who suddenly appeared; the men of the 24th fell in dozens, and before they could properly recover the Sikh cavalry raced down upon them.

One of the officers of the 24th was prostrated by a shot, but not killed. A Sikh bent over him and was about to finish him with a short sword, when his son, a boy ensign—a mere youth—rushed up to the stalwart foe and struck him down. Standing astride over his father's form, the daring lad fought bravely to defend him.

With flashing eyes and uplifted sword young Pennywick awaited the onslaught. Uttering wild cries the swarthy foemen, their faces distorted by passionate fanaticism and the lust of blood, dashed upon the young hero, who met them with undaunted spirit. There was the ring of steel and cries of rage as three Sikhs went down in rapid succession; but what could one boy do against a multitude? Before help could arrive the youthful ensign was struck down. He made one fierce attempt to deal a death blow to the leader of his assailants, and then the mob swept over him and his father, and two brave men were lost to Britain.

The 24th lost its colours, but after the battle the men found the dead body of one of the ensigns, and wrapped round the lifeless form was the flag that had been borne so proudly by the youth to whom it had been intrusted.

"DEAR SIR," he writes, "I, my wife, my two daughters (charming girls, one is engaged to an officer and the other has had *two* offers), and my three sons—the young scamps—

Portrait of a sensible man and a kind father.

read your *Big Budget* regularly every Thursday. We all think it is a splendid paper—or rather three splendid papers—and well worth the nimble penny."—FATHER OF FIVE.

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The Murder of Osmond Bedford, Actor.

I.

STANDING in Armouth Cemetery is a monument commemorating a terrible crime which has to this day foiled the police. The inscription runs:

> May God's great pity touch his heart, and lead
> My poor murderer to confess his dreadful deed,
> And when the secrets of all hearts are known,
> Guilt and repentance may alike be shown.

The victim who lies beneath is Osmond Bedford, a one-time favourite actor. He was a member of a first-class touring company known by name as the "Strand Merry-Makers," under the direction of Mr. Travis King. Bedford was the "Juvenile-leading man," to style his line in professional language, and was a fine, dashing young fellow of five-and-twenty, tall, handsome, and gentlemanly, with fair curly hair, large and expressive blue eyes, clean-shaven face, and he had the knack of dressing well "on and off the stage."

He was jovial and generous to a degree, but the man, or woman even, with the most fascinating of alluring manners, or the best graces imaginable, is liable to be cursed with an enemy of some kind, no matter what the motive of the latter may be. It may be jealousy, or disappointment, or dissatisfaction at the success of a rival, but there it is; the best of us have our enemy, who will show his teeth at every opportunity—at every turn we take on our journey through life. It was so with Osmond Bedford.

Among his compeers on the stage he had a reputation for large-heartedness, open generosity, affableness, and willingness to help on his lesser fortunate brethren of the sock and buskin, but Harry Humphreys, the low comedian of the company, a soured and withered old stork of the great army of unfortunates whose progress to fortune is somehow barred in a hundred different ways, positively hated him. Nobody knew why, except that Bedford had in his less successful days courted the sister of the disappointed Humphreys, but was now paying his attentions to somebody else.

Some people offered that as the reason, whilst others attributed other motives, alleging that Harry's fraternal love for his sister was not of that desperate order to warrant his taking such a strong dislike to the young leading actor.

The "Strand Merry-Makers" were billed to appear at Armouth. It was a small town, and the old Theatre Royal was of that type that allowed of no dressing-room accommodation for the actors, a desperate state of things that used to be, but which is now happily changed. Four of the gentlemen of the company were dressing together under the stage in a corner which had been purposely screened off or "rigged up" for their benefit. Bedford and Humphreys were among the four.

"I'm awfully sorry for you, old man," said one of the four who was employed most earnestly in the art of "making himself up" for the performance, and, half-dressed, was rubbing all over his face the usual flesh-coloured grease paint that they use, "because the fact of that letter being found in her pocket rather tells against you. Don't you think it does?"

"I know it's a deucedly awkward situation, Rankin, but my position is clear in the matter. She didn't end her life through me," replied Osmond Bedford.

"That's the rub, Mr. Bedford. I'm inclined to think the other way, which is the way that every sane person thinks. No girl would willingly place her neck on the railroad track, and invite death in such a horrible manner as suicide by decapitation, through a trivial misunderstanding only," said Humphreys with pointed effect, at the same time proceeding with his dressing for the stage with perfect nonchalance.

"What do you mean, Humphreys?" exclaimed Osmond Bedford, his face flushing with indignation.

"The explanation is on the surface of the whole thing," curtly replied Humphreys, putting down his stick of grease paint and picking up an evening paper that lay on his desk beside a bottle of spirit gum. He read the following extract out loud:

"'THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF ALICE SUGDEN.

"'The coroner's inquiry into the circumstances of the mysterious death of this young lady, who was well known at Carleton, her father being an old resident of the town, was held this morning. As has been reported,

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her mangled remains were found on the railway outside Carleton station, but the evidence now failed to prove whether the girl met her death by foul murder, or accident, or whether she committed suicide. A letter was produced found in the dress pocket of deceased, written by a——.'"

"My dear sir, you needn't read any more. I know all that. Wasn't I at the inquest this morning, and the story is too sad to have it dinned into my ear again to-night," pleaded Bedford, putting the finishing touches to his make-up.

"Ah, but just you wait a bit. You had to leave to-day before the inquiry was over, hadn't you? Of course, you didn't know how long it was going to last, and we're over thirty-five miles from Carleton, and the trains are not numerous, and when they do run they are very slow. We know all that. But do you know that the inquiry is over—that is for to-day?" said Humphreys, putting his arms akimbo, and looking Bedford significantly in the face.

"No, I didn't know that. Well, I suppose there can only be one verdict."

"Certainly, the right one, but we don't always get at the right thing at coroners' inquiries. That's been my experience. Listen," said Humphreys, holding up the paper again, and reading out aloud as before:

"'The coroner remarked that the facts strongly pointed to murder, and he adjourned the inquest till next Thursday.'"

"I quite agree with the sagacious coroner, for so far as I am aware she had no reason for destroying herself," said Bedford confidently, "and Miss Sugden's been murdered."

"Come, now, Bedford, you know differently. When a fellow takes the trouble to correspond with a girl whom he hasn't any idea of marrying, he ought to know the reason why she kills herself when he throws her over," said Humphreys, coolly turning towards his dressing place, and adjusting a wig upon his head for the part he was playing.

Bedford almost reeled at the insinuation, and throwing down a hand-mirror he was holding, he advanced towards his companion to strike him, but was stopped by Mr. Rankin.

"You scoundrel!" he cried, leaning over his friend's shoulder and shaking his clenched fist at Humphreys, "I'll pay you out for this when the show is over!"

"Yes—well, we'll both pay off old scores," replied the comedian.

"I say, you fellows, we have had enough of this," interrupted Rankin, a good-natured fellow, a man with a peaceful disposition. "Why can't you let Bedford alone, Humphreys?"

"Smart men must pay for their popularity," was the sneering answer of the other.

Incensed with rage, Bedford broke away from his friend's hold, and rushing at Humphrey, dealt that gentleman a severe, and perhaps not undeserved blow on the mouth that sent him reeling to the floor.

"Take that, you blackguard!" cried Bedford, bending over his fallen man.

Humphreys at once sprang to his feet with the swiftness of a fiend incarnate, and literally leapt upon Bedford, whom he pinned against the wall and tried to throttle. He was eventually dragged away by the others, but not before he had severely mauled Bedford. And he was a thin, spare little man was Humphreys, and about forty-five years of age.

II.

Mr. Travis King's daughter—Elsie—was Bedford's *fiancée*, and she was a member of the company, playing lead with him.

"I never saw Miss Sugden since I saw her at Norwich," he said to Mr. King during rehearsal the next day, "now six months ago. I have received many letters from her like other people have who are before the footlights, and who are in the habit of regularly receiving letters and presents from the public. I own I went so far as to send her my portrait, a character one of the part I am playing, at her own special request. When we were playing at Carleton I saw her twice, and on each occasion I told her honourably that although I was not a married man, yet I was not a free man, and that I was engaged to be married soon."

"But you never said a word of this to Elsie," said Mr. King reprovingly.

"No. Why? Because I know her to be of a jealous nature, and as there was nothing in what I did, nothing that I was ashamed of—a thing which I did out of pure kindness and sympathy, and which anyone might have done placed in similar circumstances—I thought there was nothing to tell—nothing to justify my making Elsie unhappy."

"Finding your letter in the dead girl's pocket is bad, bad, bad, Osmond," and the old actor shook his head. "You saw her twice at Carleton, and once again at Norwich."

"She followed us from Carleton to Norwich——"

"Followed you, not us," said the manager, interrupting his favourite leading man.

"I didn't ask her to come, Mr. King," said Mr. Bedford with emphasis. "I declare to Heaven, sir," continued he, with panting heart and crimsoned cheek, "that I have been true to Elsie in thought, word, and deed ever since our engagement."

"Look at the public disgrace the affair has got my company in. Your name coming out so prominently in the case at the coroner's inquiry hits every member of the company hard, and a spiteful public will do the rest for us all—they'll keep away from us. We may as well disband, and go home."

"No, don't do that. I'll punish myself for my sin of sympathy by retiring from the company, although I shall leave my friends here with a conscience clear as daylight, and a mind convinced that there is nothing much to be got out of doing an act of kindness for anybody now-a-days," said Osmond Bedford, striding away from the manager, and walking across the stage.

Seeing Elsie King talking to the other lady members of the company in one of the "wings," he turned that way, and, stopping at a few paces from them and raising his hat, he called out "Elsie!"

She advanced towards him. At the sight of him there was instant silence among the ladies.

"Are you going to cut me, Elsie?"

"I can't amend what my father has told you," said she, with dramatic and withering effect.

"But he has told me nothing."

"Oh, I see. Well, in the face of what has occurred, it will be—er—better—if——"

"If we don't meet again? I see, Elsie. This is unexpected, but as I know your proud spirit, perhaps I ought not to be surprised at your decision; but it is an unjust one," continued the handsome but cowered actor.

"Unjust, when letters from you are found on the body of a girl who finds relief in death? And this at

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a time, too, when you are, or were, engaged to me," said the actress who recited the speech as if she were delivering it on the stage, with force and pointed bitterness.

"Your father has the truth of the story. Ask him. At any rate, I am going—I think it better to—and as we are sure to meet again, I am certain that when that day comes round you'll be ready to exchange words of sympathy with me. Good-bye, and remember, I have been true to you in thought, word, and deed. I am not responsible for the death of Miss Sugden any more than you are. I wrote those unfortunate letters to her out of pity for her. I know she has been following me about, and her letters to me prove the intensity of her mistaken love for me. I told her that I was engaged to you. I would have told you all this, but I didn't want to make you unhappy. But the girl is dead; by what means, God knows. I am certain, however, it wasn't through me. If it be murder, I suppose it will out someday."

III.

THE adjourned inquest on Alice Sugden was duly held, and the jury brought in an open verdict. They exonerated Osmond Bedford from all complicity and blame in the matter, and they even went out of their way to compliment him for the straightforward way in which he had tendered his evidence.

He returned to Armouth. It was summer-time, and Armouth at this particular period of which we write was a rising seaside resort. His old company had taken their departure a few days before, but on the Sunday afternoon that they went away he was enabled to show some of his friends an engagement which he had received only that morning from a London manager. He saw that Humphreys was paying particular attention to Elsie King; in fact, it was a renewal of a friendship that had existed before, and which might have brought the two closer together had it not been for the advent of the dashing, spirited, and handsome Bedford, with whom the manager's daughter soon fell in love.

Early one morning the coastguardsmen at Armouth, seeing a boat at the foot of East Cliff, went and secured it. Looking around, they discovered the lifeless body of Osmond Bedford upon the shore, near by being some of his clothes, all the pockets of which were turned inside out. An examination of the body revealed three terrible wounds. There were two wounds in the back, and another just over the heart, a deep and long one, which had terminated the poor fellow's life. It caused a terrible consternation. There was a general hue and cry for the murderer, but the police were baffled. Many arrests were made, but they never caught the murderer, as the inscription on the tombstone testifies.

Let it be said in all fairness to her, that Elsie King was one of the first to kiss the victim of that awful deed. How she upbraided herself for the cruel way she treated him only a few days before! Her heart was rent with grief. She never left the remains of her lover from the hour of her arrival until he was laid in his coffin and buried.

Three months afterwards, the "Strand Merry-Makers" were playing at Manchester. There was a "call" for rehearsal on the Monday, the company having arrived the day before; Mr. Harry Humphreys was absent. They delayed the rehearsal for him. But he never turned up. The manager sent a special messenger to his lodgings to know the reason of the delay. The messenger returned with the thrilling news that Humphreys was dead—he had poisoned himself. On the table by his bedside was a slip of paper, on which were written these three words: "I follow Bedford."

Those who know better than we do, say that Humphreys was Bedford's murderer. But who can prove it now? MULVY OUSELEY.

1898.

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The Lie She Told.

A THOUSAND lights made the great house glow: a thousand roses filled the air with sweetness, and hidden strings sounded tremulous melody.

They sat alone in the conservatory. "Katherine," he said gently, "you know I love you. There is no need of my saying the words for—"

She interrupted him. "Stop! Words like that are an insult. Have you no sense of honour? I had believed you a gentleman: and yet with one of the best and truest of women for your wife, you come to me with this shameful story."

She arose to go, but he prevented her. "Katherine," he said unsteadily, "why should a false sense of honour hold me to my wife when I love you? Since that first day my every thought has been of you. And you love me, too, dearest: I am sure of that. Will you brave the world for me in some foreign land where none need know?"

She twisted a rose in her fingers.

"Yet you loved her once, and she is a sweet, good woman. Then go back to her and your child with what remnant of manliness you can command, and try to repay in some slight measure the wealth of devotion she has given you. It is your business to be true to her, even though you are unworthy to touch even her garment's hem."

He smiled cynically: "You are cruel."

"No, I am only honest. Men like you have no conception of right or duty. You would desert her for me, and you would leave me when the fancy struck you."

A shadow appeared in the doorway. It was Gertrude in search of her husband. Katherine drew her into the conservatory. "You little mouse, how quiet you are! Did you hear what he just said of you? No? Then I'll tell you, but you mustn't repeat it, for it's a secret." She leant over and whispered in Gertrude's ear: "He said you were 'a sweet, good woman.'"

Gertrude's pale face brightened, and her eyes filled. She looked at him in a way that was almost a caress, and they went out together, leaving Katherine alone.

"Oh, Heaven!" she breathed: "what a weak, foolish thing a woman is. A man like that, and yet—and yet—we both love him!"

The other woman's face haunted Katherine.

One day they met in the street. "Have you not heard," asked Gertrude, "he is very ill?"

Katherine assured her of her sympathy. "You must be brave, little woman: that will help him more than anything else. I'll come in to see you after a while."

When she entered, the sick man's voice sounded through the house: "Katherine, Katherine! I want you so!"

She put her pitying arms round Gertrude. "Dear, it's hard for you, isn't it?"

Gertrude's face was tearless. "He was that way all night—calling ceaselessly for you."

"He has confused us, probably," answered Katherine; "you know we were together a great deal, just before he was taken ill." Yet a wild chord of happiness thrilled her at the sound of his voice calling her name, which even Gertrude's look of relief could not lessen.

"I have brought some jelly for him to take when he is stronger."

Katherine handed her the small package.

"I'll tell him you brought it," said Gertrude slowly.

Katherine smiled. "My dear, he won't care who brought it, so long as you give it to him. I wouldn't say anything about it, if I were you."

Gertrude broke down completely. "Oh," she cried between her sobs, "how good you are!"

Katherine drew her closer. "Cry, dear, if you can," she said tenderly. "You are nervous and overwrought, and it will do you good."

"Pull yourself together, Katherine," she said to herself, as she turned the corner: "it is the other woman's heart that is at stake—not yours."

* * * * *

Katherine was in a distant city when the news of his death reached her. After the first shock was over she wrote a letter:

"Gertrude, dear, it is not easy to put on paper the things I would rather say with my arms round you, but I do want to assure you of my love and sympathy.

"I know it is hard and bitter, but there is much to comfort you—the little child who is named after him, and who loves you too. There are many women the wide world over, who would gladly give all their earthly possessions for the love which sleeps in your grave today. It is yours beyond the power of change or loss.

"I remember one night, as he helped you with your wraps, the look of love and pride in his eyes, which you did not see, and I thought as you left me, 'there goes a happy woman.'

"Men are proverbially thoughtless, you know, and sometimes they forget the little words which are the very breath of life to a loving woman; but the great feeling lives just the same, and I often think that a woman's finer sight is given her for that very thing—that she may know the unspoken thought of husband or lover.

"Death never changes love, dear; it goes on just the same. Your heart is just as full of him; and who shall say that, somewhere, the same love does not wait for you?

"I can only say 'be brave,' but you are already that, and more, as becomes the 'sweet, good woman' that you are, and, believe me, my heart aches with yours.

"In all love and sympathy. Katherine." She pressed her white face against the window and looked out into the starless night. "God forgive me if I have done wrong, but that comfort is all that there is left for her. Let her believe his love is hers as I know it is mine."

And Katherine smothered a dull, unceasing pain, but the other woman's heart swelled into a sob of thanksgiving.

MYRTLE REED.

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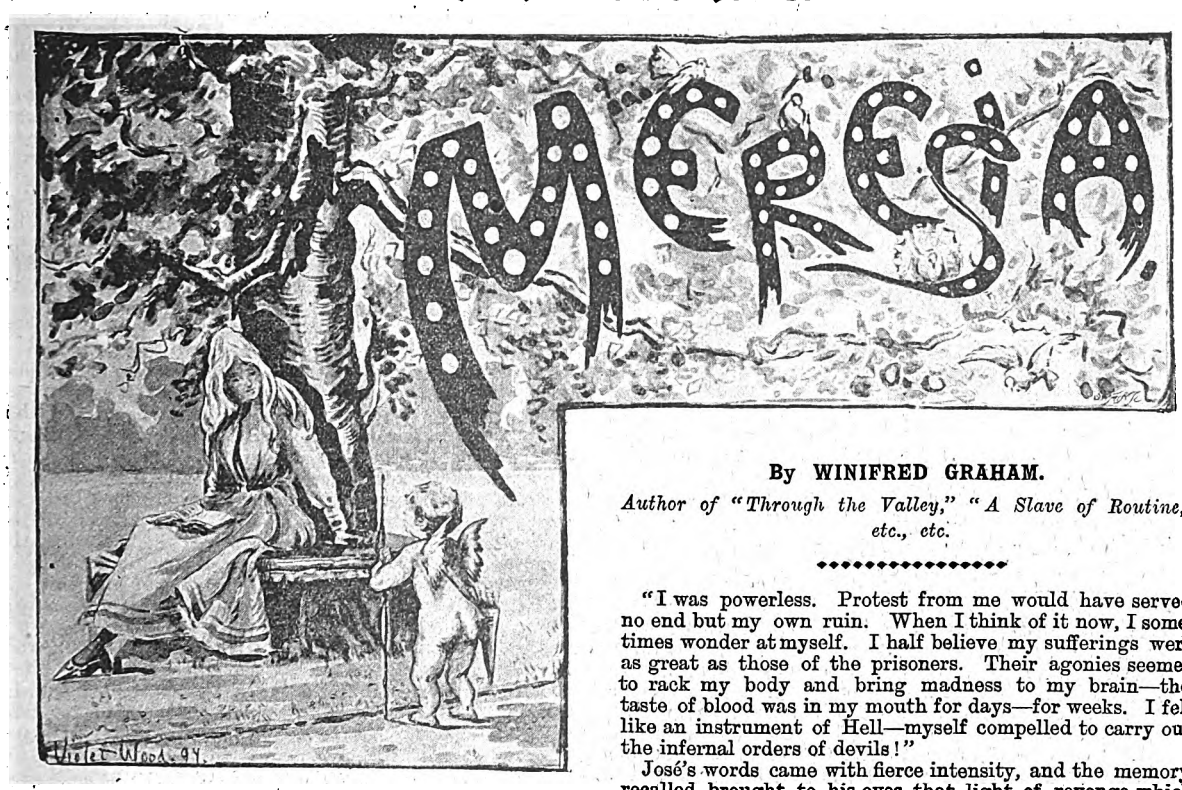

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LIFE OF WOMEN IS FULL OF WOE.

"READ this," said Meresia, "read this."

José did not touch the paper, but he bent down over the table and scanned it quickly. She watched his face, but could not see the expression in his downcast eyes.

"Why does this trouble you?" he asked at last.

"Because it refers to my husband, and because no vice or degradation to me is so horrible as the thought of cruelty practised by men of reason and education. I could find an excuse for the wretched savages who sacrifice to idols, for the barbarous deeds of the dark ages. But now, when everything is different, in a country such as Spain, that these things should be is monstrous and unpardonable. I could never have believed it, I should have laughed at the mere idea, but that my husband in no way denies, or even appears ashamed of these scandalous truths!"

"But why do you come to me?" asked José Serano.

"You were a gaoler in the Madrid prison, you must have known of, or seen, these atrocities!"

She fancied he paled at the mention of past horrors, and the lines of his mouth compressed, while Meresia's conviction grew stronger, that his hand, and his alone, exposed such dastardly doings to the British public.

"These secret trials," she continued, "they took place while you were there. The man who could not speak Spanish, and was so unmercifully tortured, did they ever give him a hearing?"

"Yes," said Serano; "finally he was heard, and his statements produced a sense of horror among the audience. I remember that his counsel, while he made his declaration before the judge, remarked with revolting cynicism: 'It seems as though this blackguard needed another lesson in Spanish.'"

"And you," cried Meresia, "stood by and spoke no word—you could endure to do that?"

"I was powerless. Protest from me would have served no end but my own ruin. When I think of it now, I sometimes wonder at myself. I half believe my sufferings were as great as those of the prisoners. Their agonies seemed to rack my body and bring madness to my brain—the taste of blood was in my mouth for days—for weeks. I felt like an instrument of Hell—myself compelled to carry out the infernal orders of devils!"

José's words came with fierce intensity, and the memory recalled brought to his eyes that light of revenge which Meresia discovered for the first time.

"Can you deny," she asked, "that you are the author of these communications?"

Serano was silent. Meresia repeated her question.

"I would rather not say. At least the writer has my sympathy and support," he replied.

"I ought not to have asked you. I understand—I, as the wife of a Spanish judge, and the very one to whom this alludes, should be the last to expect your confidence. I have always guessed that you were my husband's enemy, it puzzled me, but now I am not surprised; I only wonder how you could have endured to be near him, to live under his roof, to break his bread."

As José listened to Meresia, he wondered if anger for him, or scorn for her husband, brought the bitter ring to her wonderful voice.

He saw that the youth and joy in her face had fled, that the tragedy of knowledge changed her, making Meresia none the less beautiful, but marvellously unlike her old self.

Here was a woman to whom he could have given his confidence, unburdened his soul, had not fate made her the wife of Alfonso Aladrós. As such she was tainted in his eyes, she was part of a being loathsome to him, the half of a thing unclean.

"Talking will not better facts," he said. "Go home and forget about it, Mrs. Aladros. All wrongs will be righted some day in this world—or the next."

"In this world," she said slowly. "It is the only world of which we can be quite sure. Do you think it is nothing to me that I have married this man? Am I a child that I can go home and forget? He won me for his wife from the sheer persistency of a prolonged attack. He pursued me with relentless energy, exercising such extraordinary will power that he finally conquered. I gave myself to him in a moment of hysterical passion, caused by a new disease of the nerves called the fascination of hate. He was like a serpent. I could not escape him. I knew it, just as his

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victims knew they must suffer torture or death when he said the word. That is the solution, Mr. Serano, if you, as my husband's enemy, care to know the true inwardness of my marriage problem. The fascination has gone, but the hate remains, though it slept until to-day. Now it has come to life with the knowledge of his character, his deeds, and the dark passages in that career of which he told me nothing. So at least you and I have something in common. We are both at enmity with the same man."

This unexpected confession on the part of Meresia broke down some of José's guarded reserve. For a moment he let her see him as he was—a man of hot blood, consumed by fiery indignation against the persecutors of the helpless. He spoke words that were rash to be uttered in the presence of the judge's wife, but they were sweet to Meresia, since they re-echoed her own sentiments.

But scarcely had the words passed his lips than his old caution returned, and he cursed himself for a fool.

Meresia drew slowly nearer, her eyes blazing and her breathing quickened by excitement. She leant forward, so that a whisper, hardly audible, could be caught by José.

"You, then, at heart are an Anarchist!"

Her words shot home and startled Serano from his studied politeness. He struck the table with his fist, and the white bone of his knuckles shot through the red.

"You lie," he answered, looking her straight in the face with a candour born of necessity. "Madam, in Heaven's name I swear—you lie!"

Seeing his agitation, Meresia shook her head. His emphatic denial and twitching lips told their own tale.

"Enough," she replied. "Another time, Mr. Serano, be more careful. That is how men betray themselves. But rest assured that I shall not breathe a word of what has passed to-day. I came to question you about this article, and I have found out all I care to know. If at any time I can help you, ask me. As a woman I can do nothing alone, I am so ignorant."

She turned away with bent head, a crushed look on her beautiful face, as if her youth had died a death of shame.

José gathered up the furs she had forgotten, and wrapped them about her.

She fastened her cloak mechanically, forgetful of the cold.

"Good-bye," he said, "and Heaven help you! Without love I can scarcely wish you happiness."

"Wish me insensibility—release. Have you no prescription to cure a throbbing at the brain and heart? There is no bright word of hope, no sweet word of peace for me, only a multitude of waters—without a shore. I am a woman widowed, for how can I call the man 'husband,' whose presence makes me shudder, and whose soul is stained with the grossest offences?"

Her words remained in José's mind long after she had left him. The mysterious notes in Meresia's voice warranted that. Once or twice Serano found himself repeating them. "The grossest offences—yes, the grossest, the vilest—she was right," he said.

As Meresia drove home she began to devise ways of avoiding her husband. Her ideas were not very clear; but she had an indefinable longing to go away, if only for a night, to some quiet retreat where she might rest and think. Not to friends, who would be curious and talkative; they could bring no comfort.

She remembered that her old nurse, Sally Biden, lived at Isleworth, and occasionally let rooms, dignified by the word "Apartments" on a card in the window. Why anyone should wish to go to Isleworth was a mystery to Meresia. The place always seemed a monotonous succession of road and path, without attraction of any kind to the casual observer; but the prosaicness of this unromantic suburb commended itself now to Meresia for the very reasons that would have made her shun it hitherto. Alfonso would never dream that she had sought the shelter of Sally Biden's semi-detached villa, when she left a note excusing her absence, but furnishing no reason for this sudden desertion.

He was out when she reached her home, and, eating a hurried lunch, Meresia left with her bag on a hansom, and a sigh of relief.

"Of course, it was very purposeless," she told herself; "but Aladros must learn that in the future her *rôle* would be independence. If she preferred the company of Sally Biden, then with Sally Biden she would stay."

This thought of freedom brought lulling dreams, and in the train she closed her eyes, picturing herself a girl again.

Back at the old home, back during summer months, with the soft grass under her body and the burning glare in her face, she lay, taking her favourite sun-bath, with Tina keeping guard and pawing her loosened hair. She could see the shadowy lines of the trees and remember the "long, long thoughts of youth" with joy that was almost pain.

"My heart goes back to wander there," she murmured, still keeping her eyes closed, "and among the dreams of the days that were, I find my lost youth again."

Even as she spoke, crushing reality dispersed the pleasurable fancy, and proclaimed her the wife of Alfónso Aladros, bound by the Word of God and the law of man. She trembled at the recollection of the sudden dislike and horror with which he had filled her that morning.

All her calm self-possession, her moderation, of which Elizabeth sometimes spoke, had taken to itself wings and deserted her in the flood of circumstances. Now she felt convinced it would never return, like the dove, to the Ark. Henceforth must stormy billows be faced—the horrors, the crimes, the sins, the woes! Her heart was like a graveyard—her thoughts and faculties stood still before the ghastly phantoms—the ghosts of transgessors whom Aladros had given over to the tormentors.

She recoiled at the sordid memory of the torment, and her senses, which a few moments ago inhaled the sweetness and fragrance of the old summer home, absorbed afresh the foul air, the tainted atmosphere of London.

In a restless, miserable frame of mind she reached the abode of Sally Biden, and startled the poor old lady so that she trembled with joy and surprise, and fell to weeping

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because her dear Miss Meresia had never set foot there since the Lord gave her a husband—a brave gentleman from Spain, so she had heard say.

Meresia soothed her with many kind words and caresses, and announced her intention of spending the night with her.

"You can get a room ready for me, Sally, dear, can't you? I know you do not like being taken unawares, but I don't care about dinner, or anything, so long as you give me a cup of tea with you, and a fire to go to sleep by. I am very tired and a little sad. Ah! nothing you would understand."

"It's just the way," said Sally Biden, shaking her grey head, "with rich and poor alike! No one can't be always happy, not even them as is beautiful and blessed like you, Miss Meresia. There! I dare say if we knew, the Queen of England 'erself ain't altogether satisfied."

"Some more, some less," quoted Meresia, "but of the whole not one quite happy—no, not one."

"We've got the big bedroom to give you, deary," said the woman, stroking Mrs. Aladros's handsome furs with pride and admiration, "no one ain't used it since my poor lodger, what was an all-the-year-round customer, passed away in late autumn quite sudden like. He was a medical, and that cheery, it did my heart good to hear him whistling about the place. His hat is still a-hangin' on the door, for Mary and I couldn't abide to take it down, for he'd put the peg up himself and spoilt my panel a-doing of it. Mary shall take your bag up and unpack your things, and we'll make you real comfortable."

So the old woman prattled on, and continued to call her "Miss Meresia," which term was singularly acceptable to Mrs. Aladros.

"You shall have a cup of bovril and some poached eggs with your tea, deary; you always liked your eggs poached in the nursery. And didn't I spoil you! Bless your pretty heart!"

Meresia found the eggs on toast less appetising than of yore, or perhaps it was that she had no hunger to relish them.

Sally Biden protested at her scant appetite.

"It's but poor pickings you're taking, Miss Meresia; married life don't make you no healthier, I reckon, or maybe it is the London air what puts you off your feed. Come and sit in the front parlour, deary, in the big chair, and don't fret yourself and eat to be pleasin' me," seeing that Meresia returned to her discarded food.

Mrs. Aladros accepted the invitation of the parlour and the big chair gratefully.

Sally Biden's presence soothed her troubled nerves as none other would have done, for she was associated with childhood's days, which were hallowed to Meresia with tender memories.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRACKED AND CAPTURED.

"ARE you comfortable, deary?" asked Sally Biden.

"Oh, yes," said Meresia, perching her feet on the fender, and resting her ruddy gold head on the shiny horse-hair back of the big parlour chair. "Isn't it nice to be sitting over the fire, and pretending the old days have come back? I always made pictures in the coals, didn't I, Sally? Even when I was quite tiny, and you used to hold me on your knee and warm my toes by the high guard. But they were such different pictures then; fairies, and knights on horseback, and wonders of many kinds. Now they are all so prosaic, Sally—faces that are not pleasant—and a red-hot burning sea, that only means flame—and nothing more. Perhaps I have lost my imagination, or put it away with childish things."

"Perhaps you're thinking of your good gentleman more than fairies and such like. I was a bit afeared at first, deary, when I heard say as you'd married a furriner. But, praise the Lord, your dear mother has told me what a noble creature he is, and that a happier couple never went away alongside each other from the altar. I've prayed and prayed about you, deary, this many a long day, and always that it might be put into your heart to come and see your old Sally."

"Why were you afraid," asked Meresia, "when you heard he was foreign?"

"Because my step-sister's cousin's aunt, what lived in the North, and was the pick of the bunch, being that comely and buxom, came to service near London at eighteen years of age. She met a furrin person, a man what sold music in a piano shop, with long hair and a mouthful of an Italian name. Well, nothing would do but that she should marry him straight off. There wasn't no rice at the weddin' nor nothing, for he flurried and bustled the poor girl so, she'd hardly time to do her bit of sewing and trim up her Sunday gown. Oh, that man, he were a caution!. Temper—well, there! it was somethink shocking to hear him swear, and her so timid and cowed, poor soul! Last of all, he frightened her that dreadful she packed up her trunks and took herself off. But he wasn't going to be bamboozled. He scoured the country till he found her, and, thinking as it was another man what had got her away, he out with a revolver and let fly full in her face. Then came an inquest, and a hangin', and lots in the papers, written in big letters, and all caused by marrying a furriner, what didn't understand English ways."

"How horrible!" said Meresia. "I wish you had not told me."

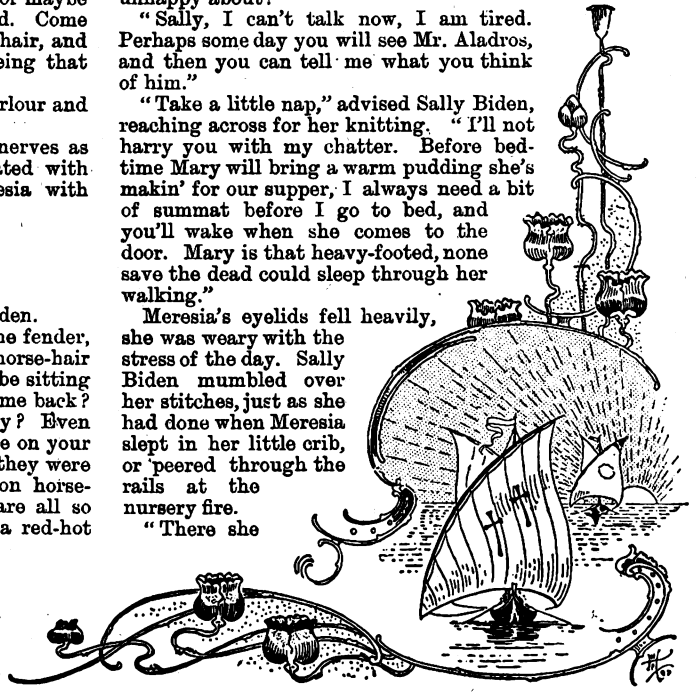
"But of course, deary, that was only one case; it don't happen every time. Jealousy's an awful thing when it do break loose, and frets the bones of a body real badly, take my word for it. But you won't make your gentleman riled, with your sweet, dear ways, and your good, true heart. He ought to be one of the best to be worthy of the likes of you."

Meresia said nothing, but as she gazed into the fiery sea, with its ships of black coal, and its shores of grey cinder, the red of the flame seemed to reach her eyes, and burn them with blood.

"You don't say nothing, deary! It ain't him as you're unhappy about?"

"Sally, I can't talk now, I am tired. Perhaps some day you will see Mr. Aladros, and then you can tell me what you think of him."

"Take a little nap," advised Sally Biden, reaching across for her knitting. "I'll not harry you with my chatter. Before bedtime Mary will bring a warm pudding she's makin' for our supper, I always need a bit of summat before I go to bed, and you'll wake when she comes to the door. Mary is that heavy-footed, none save the dead could sleep through her walking."



Meresia's eyelids fell heavily, she was weary with the stress of the day. Sally Biden mumbled over her stitches, just as she had done when Meresia slept in her little crib, or peered through the rails at the nursery fire.

"There she

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is, stumping like a trooper, drat her!" said the old woman. "It ain't time for the pudding yet: I tell you it ain't time——"

Her jaw dropped, her eyes dilated, as the door opened and the imposing figure of a man, gigantic in proportions, appeared, apparition like, before her wondering gaze.

Meresia stirred, but did not move her head.

"I don't want anything to eat, thank you; I am not hungry," she said.

The low, sweet tones fell on her husband's ears; he motioned to Mrs. Biden not to speak.

As he moved slowly across the room, a paralysing dread crept over Meresia. She saw Sally's face marked by innumerable lines of interrogation, and was suddenly conscious of Alfonso's presence.

She tried to turn, but her blood was frozen, and her limbs stiff. The days of his courtship returned with uncanny vividness, when upon various occasions Aladros would appear at the most unexpected places, like a superhuman being, knowing without being told.

He came right up to her chair, and laid his huge hand firmly on her shoulder. The clutch filled her with deadly terror, and she thought again of the shuddering wretches that hand had condemned to inhuman torture.

"Not hungry?" he said, with sarcastic emphasis. "Well, it is early yet. We shall be back in town for supper."

Meresia half rose, but her limbs refused to support her, and she sank back speechless.

Sally Biden watched the two faces curiously: Meresia's—pale, motionless; and his—smiling, contemptuous, cruel!

The old woman could have cried aloud in her consternation, for she saw the pain in her "deary's" eyes, and the hard glitter of the man's as they lighted upon his wife.

She thought of the foreigner in the music shop, and trembled for Meresia's safety.

Alfonso turned and spoke in courteous tones:

"I see you have taken good care of Mrs. Aladros; I am much indebted to you. Unfortunately I must rob you of her company to-night; but I am none the less grateful for your hospitality. I have asked your maid to fetch her wraps. The carriage is waiting."

"Sally, this is my husband," said Meresia feebly.

She dared not refuse to return. He had tracked her and caught her; she was caged for the time.

Mrs. Biden courtesyed low. This tall, dark man, in his long fur overcoat, impressed her with a sense of awe.

"It's done my heart good to see your dear lady," faltered Sally Biden; "and there's the big room warm and ready, double-bedded and aired, if so you'd do me the honour to stop."

Aladros appeared so utterly out of proportion with his surroundings that the idea provoked a veiled smile. He pulled his dark moustache and refused in the flowery language that came most easily to his tongue. Mary appeared carrying Meresia's bag and cloak; it was as much as she could do to stagger beneath them.

Aladros relieved her of the cloak, and flung it about his wife. He could have picked her up, wraps and all, like a feather, and borne her away, but though the impulse came to him, for the sake of conventionality he refrained.

Sally Biden, now convinced that the parting was imminent, and seeing Meresia's lips were trembling, brushed aside a tear with the stocking she was knitting, and clasped Mrs. Aladros to her heart.

"Good night, deary, and good rest to you," she whispered. She could say no more, for Meresia's unexpected arrival and abrupt departure sorely puzzled the poor woman. She felt there was trouble in the air—a storm brewing—but of what nature she could not guess.

"You have been so kind to me, Sally," replied Mrs. Aladros, kissing the withered cheeks tenderly. "I wish I could have stayed."

This last sentence was said with such fervour that Alfonso winced and flung the door open impatiently to signify he was tired of waiting.

"Come," he said, "you have kept the horses standing long enough."

Meresia obeyed. It was dark, and he took her arm to guide her. She seated herself in silence by his side, shivering slightly in spite of the huge rug he drew over her knees.

Sally Biden watched the carriage roll away, bearing Meresia back to London, in the keeping of her husband. Long after the sound of the horses' hoofs died in the distance, the old woman stood, forgetful of the cold, straining her eyes in the darkness and mumbling to herself, as she stared down the long road. Mary came out and remonstrated, with a shawl over her head and a duster held to her mouth.

"It be freezin'," she said, "and you'll catch your death of cold. I've stirred up the fire, and I'll get the hot puddin' straight away, if you'll come in ma'am out of the raw air."

Sally Biden suffered herself to be led indoors by the little maid.

"I don't want no puddin' now, Mary," she said sorrowfully. "I haven't the heart to eat it without Miss Meresia. She looked that sad as she said good-bye, with the tears in her pretty eyes. I could have cried outright but for the stern face of 'er furrin gentleman, and him almost knocking a hole in the ceiling with his head! I can't make no good out of it anyway, for he did not mean any kindness coming after Miss Meresia this time of night, when she was sleepy, poor darling, and wanting to be in bed. He might have let her bide in peace along of me until the morning. There seemed no sense in going back as far as I could see. But mark my words, Mary—it ain't all roses for that dear child! The eye of 'im was real terrifying, when she was a kissing of me, and sort of wishing to stay under her breath, and afraid to speak out her own mind. Do you think I couldn't feel her trembling, just as she did in the old days when she dreamt of bogies, and cried out in her sleep? It's made me regular uneasy, I feel as I do before a thunderstorm, weak at the knees, and a bit faint."

Mary listened sympathetically.

"It gave me a fine turn when he came walkin' in at the door, as if the whole place belonged to him—and what with all the talk of burglars about the town—I could have screamed!"

Late into the night the two women talked of Meresia, for she and her husband made an event in their lives, so appallingly monotonous from day to day.

For a time Alfonso sat in silence by his wife—who leant back with closed eyes unwilling to speak. At last he felt a little vibration under the rug, and she broke the trying hush with a low remark.

"Why did you come, and how did you know I was at Isleworth?"

"I came because I wanted you. I told you once before Meresia that I always should know your movements, even if you were the other side of the world, yet you thought you could hide from me within a few miles of London. Now I must question you. Was it because of that article that you tried to avoid me? Did it really annoy you?"

"Yes, I have been haunted by the thought all day."

"Then the sooner you forget these silly fancies the better. It is no business of yours, and your agitation on behalf of the prisoners is a foolish affectation, or the outcome of hysteria. If you had been in your usual health, you would have looked at these matters sensibly."

"But I was in my usual health——"

"No, you can't deceive me, Meresia. You went to Dr. Serano's, and that showed you were not well. There are very few hysterical women who have the sense to consult a medical man when they begin to be a nuisance to themselves and everybody else."

"If I was a nuisance, why couldn't you leave me in peace with Sally Biden? Perhaps that was part of my sense, too—I wished to avoid you."

"An impossibility!" said Aladros.

(To be continued.)

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CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.

THAT procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many cases, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That in the majority of cases procrastination is easily curable is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," the remarkable popularity of which is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process—a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method—of banishing their superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly-growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being requisite to insure comely and comfortable slimness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding two penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury.*

REDUCTION OF SUPERFLUOUS FAT.

We have received a copy of "Corpulency, and the Cure," and a very useful and well-written little treatise it is, showing how from 3lb. to 14lb. of fat can be harmlessly removed in a week. We quote rather an amusing extract which was published on the subject by the *European Mail.* The Editor says: "I noticed the other day that someone had contributed a paragraph containing instructions for persons who wished to reduce their weight. I don't doubt but what, if the advice given was followed, the desired effect would result; but to follow it out properly one would not have much time left during the day. Care was to be taken not to eat this and not to eat that, while to dream of certain drinks was sufficient to increase the weight by about a hundredweight. Now, Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., is my man. His treatment does not consist of any starvation business. Quite the contrary, for the mixture he prescribes is an invigorating tonic, and improves the appetite wonderfully. He treats corpulence as a disease, and so long as his instructions are followed no one need worry about dietary restrictions, but jog along in peace, and continue the usual breakfast of half-a-dozen poached eggs, two or three gammon rashers, and a pound of steak. It is a good job for the success of the 'Pickwick Papers' that the book was written before Mr. Russell came upon the scene, otherwise it is doubtful whether we should have ever heard of those jovial characters, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Weller, senior, or that truly wonderful being, the Fat Boy. The only case I can speak of personally in connection with this mixture is a friend of mine, who tried it with remarkably good effect. He was enormously fat, and, although he did not believe in Mr. Russell's treatment, when someone told him the mixture made a very pleasant drink in hot weather he tried it for this purpose. This was in June, a few years ago. In September he had to be measured for a new suit of clothes, as those he had were getting very loose, and didn't fit at all. He continued with the mixture, and the tailor had to take fresh measurements at Christmas—well, he didn't quite have to put on a couple of overcoats so as to make a shadow, but the measurements round his waist were just half what they were twelve months before. Like a sensible man, he always recommends Mr. Russell now wherever he can. So do I." His book only costs two penny stamps, but is worth a guinea. Send to Woburn House for it.—*Boston Independent.*

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS.

We were reading in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: "The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month, with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The 'recipe' can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, twopence." We had the curiosity to send to this specialist, and found to our surprise that he had discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposed of the necessity of starving oneself if he wished to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is, beyond doubt, harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or, rather, to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation, which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, seven pounds in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only.—*Rochdale Star.*

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YOU AND I.

THE winner in the picture word competition is Mr. James Matthews, "The Elms," Newbury, Berks.

JACK TAR would like to know how the North American Indians get such funny names.————When a child is born among the Indians, the medicine man in attendance goes to the opening of the wigwam, and looks out. Whatever his eye first rests upon is to be the name of the child.

PAUL.—The Prince of Wales' plume worn on State occasions is worth £10. The feathers are pulled from the tail of the feriwah, one of the rarest and most beautiful birds of India. Great expense and trouble are necessary to capture the bird, which is found only in the wildest jungles.

WHEELER writes: "What is the cause of the humming of the telegraph wires, which can be heard distinctly when passing them by the roadside? Am I right in conjecturing that the noise is caused by the wind?"————No; the wind has nothing to do with the sound. The vibrations are due to the changes of the atmospheric temperature, and especially through the action of cold, as a lowering of temperature induces a shortening of the wires, extending over the whole of the conductor. A considerable amount of friction is produced upon the supporting bell, thus inducing sounds both in the wires and the poles.

MADAME asks: "Is it true that sunshine is injurious to mirrors?"————Most decidedly it is; that is, if the sun shines directly upon the back of a looking-glass. The action of the sun upon the quicksilver has the effect of finally rendering the glass incapable of reflecting an image.

SIBE.—The title of Colonel comes from a word almost the same in several languages, signifying a column. The colonel was so called because he led or commanded a column.

AN OLD FRIEND.—Here are two different ways of making ink which is colourless, but turns yellow on being heated: (1) Saltpetre dissolved in a large quantity of water. (2) Sulphate of copper and sal ammoniac, equal parts dissolved in water.

BIG BEN writes to asks if it is true that projecting brows indicate an unusual amount of brain power? (The reason of his request is that he is himself the possessor of an overhanging brow.)————I am sorry to disappoint BIG BEN, but it is not so. Projecting brows do not contain brain matter at all. They are filled with air, nothing but air, and give a resonance to the voice.

P. L. K.—I am not at all surprised that you letter went astray if you added "Esquire" after the name on the envelope. Foreign post-office people are so ignorant that they frequently take the word "Esquire" for a place, the consequence of which is that scores of letters go astray in the course of a year.

J. O. R.—You're quite wrong. Cats can swim if they only care to exert themselves sufficiently. The ancient Egyptians used to fish with them on the Nile according to the representations on walls and so forth, that have come down to us, and I myself have known a tabby dive into a pond when after a rat.

H. H.—The proportion of blind people in the world is 800 to every 1,000,000.

COLLECTOR.—There are no English coins known bearing the superscription of Richard Cœur de Lion. Those in circulation during his reign were struck in his father's (Henry II.) name.

S. W. asks: "How is it that one's voice has a different sound to other people than to oneself?"————The explanation is that voices are conveyed to the auditory nerve not only through the outside ear, but more directly from the inside, through the Eustachian tube as well as through the muscles and bones of the mouth and head. Thus the singer or speaker not only hears his voice from a different quarter, as we may say, but he hears besides the contraction of his own muscles.

BORONIA.—The custom of a woman assuming her husband's surname is a very ancient one, although it has not always existed. There was "Julia of Pompey," and "Octavia of Cicero." The name being a surname with us is the only difference. In Switzerland the men often adopt their wives' surname after their own.

FERGUS.—No man has the option of "cutting" a lady. If she thought proper to bow to him, and he did not raise his hat, he would forfeit all claim to be a gentleman—at any rate, so far as manners are concerned.

AN "OLD" READER.—The only way to make the hair grey is by bleaching, and it would take years, even of this process, to do it successfully. Occasionally one reads of instances in which a person's hair becomes white in a few hours, owing to a sudden shock. You might get a friend to help you in that way, if you think the game is worth the candle.

H. C. T.—A Prince of Wales is of age from his birth, and a chair is placed for him on the right of the throne in the House of Lords.

N. R.—The first equestrian statue erected in Great Britain was that of Charles I., at Charing Cross, facing Parliament Street.

V. T. P.—Of course, there is no reason why young foals should not be eaten as well as young calves. They are quite a common article of diet in Spain, where they make a good substitute for venison.

TIMID asks: "Is a house lighted by electricity more or less likely to be struck by lightning than one lighted by gas?"————It doesn't make the slightest difference one way or the other.

H. C. E. would like to know where the line is drawn between soft and hard water?————Water is generally reckoned to be soft when it contains less than 1-5000th part of its weight of mineral ingredients, and "hard" when it contains more than 1-4000th.

MENTUS.—It is quite a fallacy to suppose that a liberal consumption of fish strengthens the brain. It is true that fish contains a certain amount of phosphorous, and that is why it is known as "brain food." The constituents of brain matter will be found in any moderately varied diet, and no special food will affect the brain one way or another in any but an infinitesimal degree.

AMICUS.—The Commissionaire Office is at 419 Strand, London, W.C., and applications should be addressed to Major Walter. Only discharged army and navy men with good characters are eligible to become commissionaires. It would be impossible to say exactly what their duties are, for they are many and various, as messengers—some being employed by the railway companies, others at clubs—or even as janitors at museums, in fact, any capacity where strict integrity is required.

DEVOIR.—If you wish to obtain a position as steward on board ship, the best thing for you to do would be to write to the Stewards' Department of one of the big companies, say, for instance, the Cunard Steamship Co., Palmerston Buildings, 93 Bishopsgate Street Within, E.C., or the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. at 122 Leadenhall Street, E.C. A permanent stewardship is very difficult to get, as the stewards of a vessel are generally people who offer their services in such a capacity in exchange for a free passage and their food.

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THINGS LINKED TOGETHER.

In one of his thoughtful essays on evolution Mr. John Fiske points out that the men of the River Drift and the men of the Caves never took heed of the future. To be able to meet the coarse necessities of to-day was the measure of their ambition. Hence they are known to us only by their geologic record.

The real progress of civilisation is marked by man's growing ability to understand the sequence of events and to provide against calamities. And in no department of our lives is this more important than in the management of our own bodies. Even the medical profession—the essence of conservatism—is slowly learning that the question of health is less and less a question of "curing diseases" and more and more a question of assisting nature to preserve and to renew vital force.

A case which has just been made public will serve to throw light on the point. Among those present at the annual "Feast" at Welford, near Rugby, in September, 1892, was Mr. C. H. Bland, a carpenter, residing at Welford. On the occasion mentioned he took a severe cold. Commonly colds of this sort are gotten rid of in a few days by care, without medication. In this instance, however, matters took the opposite turn, and Mr. Bland was booked for a disagreeable and dangerous experience.

From the very outset his symptoms were of a profound and alarming character. He became cold as death, had great pain in the lower part of the back, and in the left side there was a singular sense of numbness, as though a stroke of paralysis were impending. He also complained of what he called a "dragging" pain, which seemed to begin at the heart and extended to the left hip. His mental prostration was very great; he felt, he said, as if he should die.

Heroic measures were at once resorted to for his relief. Hot applications were employed, but in spite of all that could be done, Mr. Bland remained in great agony the whole of that night—of course without rest or sleep.

The next day he was seized with a violent diarrhœa, and became so weak he could not move. What followed is concisely set forth in his own words. We quote from his letter under date of December 6th, 1893.

He says: "A doctor was sent for, who said I was suffering from English cholera. I had severe griping pains in the bowels, and so violent a headache that I was unable to lie down."

We may say here that although the doctor was mistaken, as events proved, the symptoms then present went far to justify his diagnosis. His error arose from the fact that he had not taken account of *the entire case*. The truth is that the diarrhœa was, under the circumstances, natural, and, to an extent, helpful.

"In a few days," continues Mr. Bland, "I was taken with palpitation of the heart. All night long I tossed about on the bed, and from time to time shook from head to foot with chills. During the succeeding fortnight I took seven bottles of physic and got no relief. I was now so reduced that I could scarcely crawl. At last my wife persuaded me to try Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. The first few doses relieved me, and in a week's time I got to work, as strong and hearty as ever, and have not had a day's illness since (Signed) C. H. Bland."

Now let us hark back, and quote the *first* paragraph of our friend's letter. Here it is: "I was always strong and healthy up to the summer of 1892, when I began to feel heavy, dull, and out out of sorts. My appetite died away, my food did me no good, and I was weak and tired."

That will do. The chain is perfect. The trouble began as indigestion and dyspepsia; the weakness caused by that made the cold a certainty, and the other results followed in regular order. The remedy he ultimately used (Seigel's Syrup) went to the root of the matter, set the food machinery running right, and Mr. Bland was well before he could realise it.

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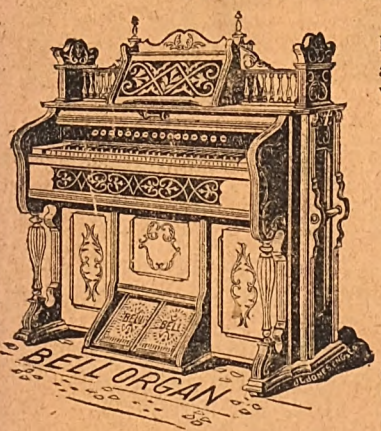

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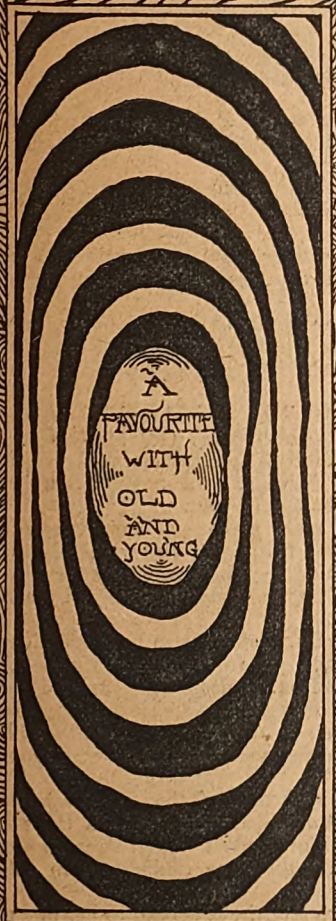
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 472.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 15th, 1898.



A WAIF OF THE - - PLAINS. - -

You can't change the nature of a human being any more than the leopard can change its spots. Take a savage and make a civilised creature of him; he will probably behave well while amongst civilised people, but should he come into contact with savages again, the old man will show itself; and the reverse holds good. Take a Christian boy (or girl) and bring him up with savages, but, so soon as the strange influence is removed, you will see the old nature asserting itself.

I've seen instances of both. I've knocked about a good deal, and I know it's a fact. Why, I met with an instance of the latter kind whilst I was serving in the United States Army. Ah, yes, I ought to have remembered before I began talking that I should let myself in for an hour's yarn spinning and a dry throat. Well, I'll do you the justice of saying that I believe you when you affirm that my throat shall not be allowed to become parched.

It was the case of a child of Scandinavian descent who had fallen into the hands of the Apachés—goodness knows how—and had been "brought up" by them. Yet she quickly developed as good a specimen of the modern

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American girl as——. But there, it's a poor way to tell a story by commencing in the middle! So here goes to tell it in proper form.

For days and weeks those of us who had not flown to the safety of the town and the larger camps had watched for the coming of the Apachés, who had been raiding the outlying ranches and the smaller mining camps; and at last they came.

It seemed as though millions of howling, sharpshooting demons had surrounded the camp, and every man who could handle a rifle was needed.

Driven back from the surrounding hills to the confines of the camp proper into our very cabins, where the women and children were—bullet after bullet was sent after an unseen enemy who lay behind the rocks. Then——

There came a bugle call of which we knew not the technical meaning, but we did know that troops from Fort Bayard had come to our rescue, and that we and ours were saved.

Lieutenant Horton was in the thick of the fight, and so busy chopping at the Indians that he never knew what did happen that night, not exactly. He remembered only that when the trouble was all over in this (his first) engagement, he was the possessor of a shattered arm, a broken rib or two, a cut head, and a small, blonde prisoner, whom he had captured at the point of the sword when the troopers found the obscure canyon in which the Indians had concealed their families.

Horton's prisoner came along with surprising willingness. Her complexion was tanned by the sun and winds almost as dark as that of any Apaché, but the same influences had served only to bleach her naturally light hair to an unmistakably tow and molasses colour. She must have retained some recollection of her Scandinavian parents, else she had not come along with Mr. Horton so willingly, for she had a temper, as was presently discovered by several persons. Yet she could not, or would not, speak a word aside from the Apache dialect, and we could learn nothing through the interpreters of her origin or as to the time she had lived among the Indians.

It was embarrassing to all of us to know what we should do with this waif. Those of Apaché parentage we could, and would, return to the reservation. But this one.

The women had talked it over with doubtful shakes of the head, when John Marcus Horton strode modestly into the breach, and offered to send her to his mother in Ohio—an offer gladly accepted.

And, as it was arranged, Olga, as she was called, was sent to his mother in Ohio. A couple of months afterwards he obtained leave of absence, and was away for three weeks. During that time he had been to visit his people, to return with glowing accounts of the manner in which Olga was getting on with her studies and the ways of polite society.

He managed to get away for a day or so at fairly frequent intervals, and after each of these trips it was "Olga this" and "Olga that," until we were tired of hearing of his little "Norwegian Apaché," as one of the boys ungallantly dubbed her one time when Horton was not present. In fact we grew quite tired of it.

But when, after his third visit east, Horton returned to Silver City, bringing with him his mother and the little "Norwegian Apaché," what a change of ideas and a surrender of hearts! Instead of an angular, awkward young person, possessed of points that might make her, when developed, a beauty of the "lily" type, behold a *petite* young woman, with a wealth of pale golden hair, beautiful eyes and teeth, complexion of roses and cream, and a decidedly vigorous constitution which called for lots of horseback riding and other outdoor exercises. All of us, even the ladies, were charmed with her.

Then they began to think that it would be well if Olga captivated one of the young men and left the wealthy Horton for one of the girls, and upon this basis campaign went on, much to the evident amusement of Olga, who, with womanly intuition and a knowledge of the ways of women far beyond her years, put two and two together and told Horton it was all very funny. "Fancy those army frumps, Jack, being jealous of me—poor me! Jack" (this with mock solemnity), "are you in love with me?"

"Olga, I wish you would not talk in that frivolous manner. It isn't like you, and you should have enough consideration for me to believe those people sincere in their attentions."

And Horton turned away with a pained look; but Olga's arms were round his neck, and her face was close to his. With wet eyes she whispered:

"Jack, dear, have I hurt you?"

Never before had John Horton been so tempted. Should he now tell her what for two years had been in his heart of hearts, unknown to anyone?

It was but a momentary struggle, then Horton was himself again.

"Yes, you have, dear. Please don't speak of my friends again in that way," he said, disengaging her arms.

Olga's mouth drooped, and there was a piteous look in her eyes as she replied:

"I won't, John."

Then, with a sudden kiss, she walked away as though she intended to go to her room for a big, feminine cry.

Horton stood for some seconds, her parting kiss burning upon his cheek, her pathetic face, as he had seen it when she left him still before his mind's eye.

"I'm an old brute!" he told himself. "A man of my age" (he was twenty-eight) "talking to a buoyant, irrepressible child in that manner merely because I am supposed to be her guardian! Jack, you old scoundrel, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

If there were a male person in south-western New Mexico who did not fall down and worship that little "Norwegian Apaché," he failed, probably through fear, to disclose himself, but the case of Danby of the Ninth was the most serious.

He all but neglected his duties to be at her side when she and Mrs. Horton were stopping at the post, and, even in his infatuation, almost compromised her by falling in with one of her mad fancies one day when he had obtained leave of absence, and riding with her unchaperoned to Lordsburd and back, returning at dead of night.

For this, Horton took both of them seriously to task as soon as he learnt of the affair, as he did the evening following through his shocked and distressed mother, who rode into town in an army ambulance in order to tell him.

But a week or two later he proposed to her at a picnic given by the ladies of the garrison in honour of Olga's departure from the fort. She refused him, she was kind enough to him, and all that, but Danby took it

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rather hard, and swore he'd resign his commission, retire to the mountains, and adopt hermitage as a profession. Instead, however, he exchanged to a northern post, fell in love again and married his colonel's wife's sister, who was plain, but who had money enough to disguise the fact somewhat.

Fielding comes next. He was a leading light of the local bar at one of the larger Arizona towns, and attended to a good deal of business for Horton, who was interested in copper over there. He came to Silver City to consult with his client, met the "papoose," and a heart theretofore considered impregnable capitulated at first glance, and Fielding was lost. He neglected his other suits to attend to this one to such a degree that it hurt his practice, and in the end he met the same fate at the charmer's hands as had poor Danby—with a difference. Miss Olga told him that if he remained of the same mind until the following year he might propose again, and she "might" then consider the matter. Meanwhile if Mrs. Horton did not object he might write to her at school, but she would not answer his letters.

Poor Fielding was utterly cast down, not even the permission to write affording him any hope, and all that kept him from suicide was an earnest request from Horton neither to make an ass of himself nor to die on the premises, after which that severe guardian lectured his ward quite harshly for her flighty ways, especially when her arts were practised upon his own personal friends.

"But I don't mean to, Jack, really I don't. What makes them act so? I can't help it!" sobbed the culprit.

"Yes, you can," said her mentor severely, adding mentally, "but they can't!"

He looked out of the window a moment, then turned to her.

"Papoose," he said in a strained voice. "I think it best you and mother should curtail your visit and go back to Ohio as soon as you can pack up. I'll speak to mother about it to-night, and, well, I'll see you at Christmas, anyway."

There was a quiet sob from the sofa, which gave Horton suicidal feelings, and in another moment he would have gone to comfort the weeper, but just then he heard his mother's step on the walk, and when she entered Olga had fled to the privacy of her room.

* * * * *

It was rather more than a year later that Horton wrote his ward a letter somewhat to the following effect:

"There has been enough of this sort of thing. I suppose you do your flirting now with the hitherto sedate and dignified professors for want of better material. Now, Olga, this must stop. Here is Jim Fielding, one of the best, brightest, most intelligent fellows in the world, going to the dogs on your account. I want you to be serious and think things over, and when you come down here this time do give Jim a chance."

Olga came at the regulation time, with Mrs. Horton, and it was very shortly after her arrival—not more than two days—that Fielding again declared himself.

But it was a different Olga to whom he spoke this time. It was a girl with the same old ways, the same odd fancies, but yet a girl who could understand and appreciate his feelings and pity him with her whole heart, without making her pity obnoxious. She had known, she said, that this was coming, and had dreaded, yet hoped for this talk, but she did not tell him of her stormy interview with John Horton that afternoon when that ogre had told her she must accord Fielding a hearing, or—or—there would be indefinite trouble.

"Will you shake hands with me, Mr. Fielding?" the girl asked tremulously, when she had finished telling him how she had long thought it over, and found she could not love him. "I suppose it's useless to say I'm sorry, although I hope you know I am. So——"

"I know you are, Miss Horton. I believe in your sympathy and your kindness of heart as thoroughly as I believe in human existence. And I believe in myself enough," he went on more firmly "to think that I might be the successful one, were it not for another—some one. Good-night. God bless you both!"

They shook hands as two ordinary acquaintances might have done, and Olga disappeared through the hall and up the stairs.

That very day, Horton had made himself practically certain that the future of his giddy ward was assured; that, true to his behests and the promptings of a conscience, he had done everything to make worldly Olga engage herself to Jim Fielding. Then, after all his guests had gone to bed and he was left alone in his library, this great, big ex-soldier, thinking it was all over, and that he was forsaken, leant his head on the table and cried like a baby.

He was a baby, too, for presently someone entered the room quietly, and, kneeling beside him, said:

"Tell me, Jacky—tell your mother."

Some women are jealous of their son's loves. Jack's mother was not one of these, no matter what her other faults might be.

"You can't direct a woman's affections, darling, any more than you can direct the tides or the winds. And—it seems to me—you have done a great deal for Mr. Fielding in this case."

* * * * *

There must have been at least twenty guests at Horton's house to celebrate the home coming, and these had progressed through nearly every course, when one of the girls, who sat opposite Olga, remarked suddenly:

"Why, Olga Horton, where's your pretty solitaire? The last time I saw it——"

Olga flushed, then paled, as she rose, trembling, and showed the solitaire (a gift from Mrs. Horton from among the family heirlooms) on the third finger of her left hand.

"It's just changed hands, that's all," she said, trying to speak brightly, "because Jack and I are to be married next summer." Then she smiled on them all and was gone, and presently Jack, utterly bewildered, but entirely happy, found her in the garden crying.

"Sweetheart."

"Go away! I hate you! I——"

"Another lie," commented Jack judicially, but exultantly. "However, you're forgotten, for the sake of the cause in which it was told. But here, Sapphira, how are we to explain things?"

"Why, just go and tell them that you're an old, slow poke, and a duffer, and that I'm a silly school girl, but that what I say 'goes'—and Jack, it's just seven years ago this time that you found me, and it's leap year, too, and, Jack, you're not cross, are you?"

"Of course I am," he replied between kisses. But he did not say it with any measure of solemnity. And that proved what I said at the beginning.

RICHARD LEMON.

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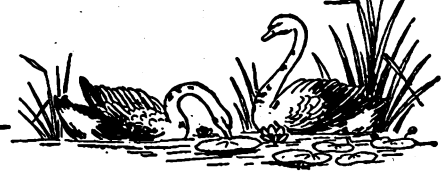
The Same Old Cure.



Alida Erving sat at the window. It was a beautiful morning, and the view across the river to the towering hills beyond was an inspiring one; but Alida's eyes showed no expression of pleasure as they wandered to and fro over the lovely landscape. The girl had been ill for three weeks, and was now awaiting the doctor's visit.

Mrs. Erving was moving about the room busy with her morning's occupations. From time to time she cast a furtive, anxious look at her daughter.

"I think you are better this morning, Alida," she said for the third time. "Your colour is better, and you look more like yourself."

"Yes; I am stronger, mother. I shall soon be well," the girl replied listlessly.

"Dr. Grantley will soon be here now; he said he would come at nine o'clock this morning," continued Mrs. Erving, glancing at the clock.

Secretly, she was very much enraged at the family physician. She did not think he was doing her daughter a particle of good, and, indeed, this seemed to be the case, for Alida was certainly not improving.

There is one other person against whom Mrs. Erving cherished a feeling of strong indignation, and that was Archibald Hopkins. He was Dr. Grantley's young medical assistant, and one of Alida's most devoted friends. The young man had called twice since the singular malady which so baffled Mrs. Erving, and, she believed, the doctor also, had taken possession of Alida, and then had come no farther than the door. He had simply inquired after Alida's health and had declined Mrs. Erving's invitation to come in. She mentioned her surprise to her daughter, but only once.

"Why should Archie Hopkins come here," Alida had replied with heightened colour, "when I would most certainly decline to see him? I do not wish to see anyone until I am well."

Dr. Grantley now came in. He was a stout, florid man, with silver hair and moustache, and blue eyes which were generally very merry, but which could also look very stern.

"How is our patient this morning?" he cried cheerily. "Ah, greatly improved, I can see at a glance. There will be no more need for me to come here after this week, I fancy."

"I think you might as well have stayed away altogether," said Mrs. Erving to herself.

"Well, now that you are so much stronger, come, take a turn in the garden with me," continued the Doctor in the same cheerful voice. Alida faintly protested her lack of strength. "Nonsense," persisted the Doctor, "I am your physician, and I tell you you are quite strong enough. We shall not go far."

Slowly they walked, the fair young girl leaning on the Doctor's arm, until they reached a rustic bench under an elm tree some fifty paces distant from the verandah.

"Well," he said at length, "you are no better, are you?"

The girl looked up quickly. She thought she saw a challenge in the Doctor's eye.

"Not a bit," she answered, looking him full in the face.

"I don't know what you mean by keeping ill like this," said the Doctor, in a complaining tone. "I have visited you assiduously, have been most careful in watching the various phases of your case, and in compounding prescriptions——"

The girl's eyes were cast down, but the Doctor detected a faint smile hovering about the corners of her mouth.

"You did not take my medicine," he said.

"No—that is—yes; one powder. It was bitter, and I threw the others out of the window."

The Doctor took out his memorandum book, and, turning his back upon Alida, wrote busily for fifteen minutes.

Left to herself the girl leant her head back against the tree and closed her eyes. The Doctor did not stir. Had he brought her to this place by design? There must be memories associated with a rustic bench beneath a tree if two lovers have been in its vicinity. And, indeed, Alida was dreaming.

It was a lovely summer night. Some one was strumming a guitar and singing softly on the verandah, and Alida and Archie Hopkins sat hand in hand beneath this very tree. The music swelled louder, and Archie drew Alida gently towards him. As the song died away her head rested gently upon his shoulder and his lips touched hers. It was the night of their betrothal. Then came that wicked, senseless quarrel—Alida shivered, opened her eyes and sat upright. The Doctor had just time to turn his head away again.

"I think I will go in now," said the girl. "I am tired."

"Wait a moment, Alida," said the Doctor. "I am not angry with you for throwing my medicines away. They were only harmless tonics, but you are right, for, frankly, I did not know what ailed you. I have made an entirely different diagnosis now, and to-morrow will bring a prescription which I am confident will cure you. Promise me that you will try to get well for my sake, Alida, for if you do not get better soon your mother will shut the door upon me."

"Very well, I promise; and I will take what you

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bring to-morrow," said Alida, smiling, as she gave the Doctor her hand.

When Dr. Grantley drove home he found Archie Hopkins apparently deep in a medical volume, but he detected in Archie's eyes the same faraway look he had observed in Alida's.

The Doctor laid his medicine case on the table, sat down and said:

"Hopkins."

The Doctor evidently had something serious to say. Archie closed his book and drew his chair up to the table. He was a tall, long-limbed young fellow, with waving brown hair and a frank, handsome face.

The Doctor seemed to have forgotten that he had spoken. He had lighted a cigar and was puffing away at it, while he stared straight in front of him.

At length he said: "Hopkins, twenty years ago your father came to this town a poor young man. He needed friends, and he found one in me."

"He often spoken to me of your kindness, sir," said Archie, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"So he did to me, and he told me that if ever I wanted his aid in any matter, he would be happy at the opportunity to serve me. I never had to call upon him, but to-day I have to call upon his son."

"There is nothing I would not do for you, Doctor; but I need not tell you that, I know."

Again there was an interval of silence, while the Doctor puffed furiously at his cigar.

"It is simply this, Hopkins. I have a case which baffles me completely. It is a humiliating confession to make; but it is true. The family of the lady, old patients of mine, have found that I don't know anything about the case, and are losing confidence in me. I am greatly distressed about it," and the Doctor looked very miserable indeed.

"What is it you want me to do, Doctor?"

"Only this. You are an alert young man, and of a sympathetic nature. I only want you to look with fresher eyes at the case, which I think is one to be reached rather by intuition than by any great degree of medical skill. I want you to promise me that you will go with me to-morrow and see this patient, that is all."

"But, Doctor, you forget I have had almost no experience; and if, with all your knowledge——"

"Fiddlesticks! The longer I live, the less I find I know," said the Doctor angrily. "Sometimes I think all we old fellows ought to retire and give the younger generation a chance. It at least has confidence in its ignorance, and that is everything. Come, you promise?"

"Yes, sir; I promise."

The next morning Archie sat beside the Doctor when the latter started in his dog-cart on his daily round of visits.

It was almost noon when the Doctor turned his horse into the Egyptian Road. He had then just begun an exhaustive comparison between the old and new schools of medicine, which was not finished when he pulled up at the Erving gate.

"Tie the horse," he said to Archie, who evidently intended to remain in the dog-cart, as he did at the other places. "This is where our patient lives."

"But, Doctor," cried Archie, "why didn't you tell me it was here? I really cannot go into Mrs. Erving's house."

"Indeed, and why not?"

"Well, you see, Miss Erving and I—we are not exactly ——"

"What have I to do with such childish nonsense?" cried the Doctor, in his sternest tones. "This is a serious matter, sir."

"But, Doctor, one moment ——"

"You have promised, sir; do you want to go back on your word?" thundered the Doctor. "Come along."

Dr. Grantley strode up the walk and Archie had no resource but to follow him.

Mrs. Erving was in the porch. The Doctor gave her a look, and she expressed no surprise at seeing Archie. She said "good-morning" pleasantly, shook hands, and in reply to the Doctor's question said that Alida was in the front room.

"Is she alone?" asked the Doctor, in a low voice.

"Yes, alone."

When the two men stood in the hall at the door of the room where Archie's sweetheart was awaiting the coming of her physician, all unconscious of who it was that stood with palpitating heart upon the threshold, the Doctor said:

"Courage, now, and do your best. If you cannot cure her I shall abandon the case. Hand her this when you go in; it will help to break the ice."

"But you are coming in with me, aren't you, Doctor?"

For answer the Doctor knocked on the door. "Come in," said a sweet, faint voice. The Doctor turned the knob, gave Archie a gentle push, and closed the door behind the young man.

* * * * *

It was not until two years afterwards that Dr. Grantley told the whole story, and by that time Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins enjoyed it as much as anyone.

The Doctor would tell with great glee how the young physician did not come out of the sick-room until two hours after he, the Doctor, had driven away, and how he would have had to walk back to town had not Mrs. Erving kept him until after tea and then sent him home herself. And how the improvement in Alida was wonderful from that day on to the following Sunday, by which time she had entirely recovered.

There was one thing, though, which the Doctor never told of his own account. He always waited for the question which was sure to come when he had apparently finished his story.

"What was on that paper which you put into Archie's hand and told him to give to Alida?"

"The paper? Oh, yes," the Doctor would reply, "I kept a copy of it—here it is," and he would fumble in his waistcoat pocket. It read: "This is my prescription. It is pleasant to take, and its efficacy is warranted. Please do not throw it out of the window."

PETER WILSON.

THE following coloured pictures will be found in the January number of the IMPERIAL NAVAL AND MILITARY ALBUM:

NAVAL.	MILITARY.
H.M.S. Northampton.	Cavalry on March.
Boys at Exercise.	Picket 1st Dragoon Guards.
Cutlass Drill.	Filling a War Balloon.
Drill at 12-pounder Hotchkiss.	Reconnoitring from a War Balloon.
Band of Northampton.	Physical Drill With Arms.
Gymnastics.	Dinner in Barrack-room.
Prepare for Cavalry.	Signalling by Heliograph.
H.M.S. Orontes.	A Field Kitchen.

Each Part is ready on the 15th of the month and costs One Shilling.

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TOM'S WIDOW.

"YE-ES," said Mrs. Craig, as we sat sewing in her cosy sewing-room, "most folks notice that tidy."

The tidy in question was a nightmare vision, a combination of gaudy colours never to be found except in those horrors devised by the economical to use up "odds and ends." It was made of canvas, and bits of zephyr wool left from more ambitious pieces of work were sewn in here and there, without regard to colour, in a manner that was enough to set anybody's teeth on edge.

"Do—do you admire it?" I asked, fearful of giving offence by plain speaking.

The old lady took off her spectacles, wiped them, put them on again, leant her head on one side, and said slowly and gently in a voice mild as new milk:

"My dear, I think it is the most unutterably hideous object I ever beheld in the whole seventy years of my life. Nobody could have made that tidy but Tom's widow."

"Oh," I said, not knowing exactly how to answer, for Mrs. Craig was almost a stranger to me. My husband, a commercial traveller, had gone abroad for two months, and Mrs. Craig, an influential member of the Bilstowe congregation, had invited me to stay with her while he was away. I was very soon made to feel at home in the dear old lady's motherly care, but it is easily understood that I could know nothing of herself or her neighbours and family, except what she chose to tell me.

"You do not know who Tom's widow was, my dear," she said presently, as I stitched in respectful silence; "how should you? Tom was my son—one of my sons, I should say, for I had nine, and four daughters, though you find me alone. Some are dead, some married, but all who are living have their own homes and families. Tom went to Dublin, and started in business; he married there, and when he died it was natural for me to suppose that his widow would remain in her own home, among her own people. Tom was not thirty when he died, and I knew she was much younger. But one day, when I was grieving, as mothers will, my dear, for my son, there walked in a little mite of a figure that I should have taken for a child but for the widow's weeds. She came straight to me, lifted her veil, and, looking out of a pair of baby blue eyes straight into my face, said:

"'I am Daisy, dear mother, Tom's widow. I am all alone in the world; but Tom said he was sure if I came to you, you would be good to me.'

"I took her straight into my heart, the little, winsome darling, and loved her as my own. So, my dear, if I tell you of my trials with her, do not think it is from want of love."

I was sure it was not, for the dear old lady's voice was full of tenderness.

"It was lonely for her for one thing," said Mrs. Craig, "for her mourning, and it was a deep heart-sorrow, kept her secluded; and as there was no need for her to employ herself usefully, she began to plan delightful surprises for me. She was possessed by a very demon of fancy work. While she exercised it upon sofa cushions and footstools with distorted dogs and dislocated cats embroidered in Berlin wool upon them, I endured with patience, although my old-fashioned ideas were certainly amazed at the sums that Daisy spent on materials. Tom had left her well provided for, and as she had no expenses here, her pocket money was a very handsome income.

"As I said, I did not object to the poor little lonely child taking all the pleasure she could find in embroidering hideous designs on canvas and putting the results in the most conspicuous places in the house, but this mild form of her mania soon gave place to the desire to excel in every species of work that came up to waste the money and time of idle women. This old house, which has been in my husband's family for generations, is full of treasures endeared to us by age and association. The first piece of vandalism that I was expected to admire and secretly groaned over was the transformation of a pair of Venetian glass vases that my son Henry brought from the Continent for me. They stood in the spare room, and never was a servant allowed to touch them, the exquisite, fragile beauties.

"Imagine my horror when Daisy exultingly led me to the room and displayed her handiwork. My lovely vases! Outside each one was pasted a coloured landscape cut from a Christmas number of some journal, over which a garland of leaves was varied by bunches of grapes, currants, cherries, flowers, birds, and butterflies. Then the inside was plastered with blue paint. What was on my tongue was never spoken, for the blue eyes danced with delight at my supposed pleasure, and how could I be cross with Tom's widow?"

"Could you never get it off?" I asked pitifully.

"Never. My vases were ruined. The next really dreadful deed, varied by atrocities of minor importance, was Daisy's discovery of my great-grandmother's wedding dress, a white brocaded satin that we cherished far more than any old gold, but which Daisy ruthlessly cut into pin-cushions, embroidering each one and producing them triumphantly for a Christmas surprise. The girls were here—my girls—and my sons and their wives, and there arose such a howl as sent the wee blue-eyed mite to my arms in sheer terror.

"It was at that party that Willie Norman, whose brother is my Kate's husband, first saw Daisy. Long after the others had forgotten the pin-cushions I saw Willie in a corner with Daisy, evidently consoling her. Two babies together, my dear, though Willie is the dearest fellow! He came over very often after that (they live at Fenwood, ten miles from here), and was kind enough to discover in Daisy all sorts of latent talent for decorating everything within reach. What I suffered from their decorative mania never can be described."

"I can imagine it. I had five sisters, and we were all smitten," I said. "What started as a beauty to cover unsightly spots soon became a frenzy! My mother came to the rescue at last and scrubbed away every inch."

"Willie brought her all the designs to be found, and carried the china she decorated (?) to be baked! Oh, my dear! The tea set made in Canton for Mr. Craig's grandmother's wedding present, with gilt monograms and quaint handles to the cups, all different, was decorated, carried off by Willie, the horrible pictures all baked in,

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and then presented to me for a birthday gift. I could not tell you half, no, not the twentieth part of the dreadful destruction. You can see, dear, that the house is finished inside with oak which not a brush had even touched, but years of rubbing, waxing, and polishing have made like glass. We pride ourselves, I assure you, upon our oak finish."

"And well you may," I said. "I have admired it more than I can tell you."

"Then you can imagine my consternation when I came home, after a fortnight's visit to my daughter Marian, to find Daisy was painting the doors of the dining-room in panels. Willie had put on the first coat all over the two doors—white paint, my dear! The panels were in red, blue, green, yellow—each a different colour—and upon each a different design. Such spiky grass! Such stiff leaves, that looked as if they were cut out of tin! Such wooden birds, that looked as if their wings were held apart with a skewer! Such staring roses, flaring with red paint——"

"Such an altogether!" I quoted, as the dear old lady paused.

"Yes, my dear. I looked first at a lily of the valley that resembled snowballs on a green shutter, and then at the culprits. Willie must have read my dismay in my face, for he looked ashamed, but Daisy's lips were parted in what I presume was artistic ecstasy, her pretty cheeks were flushed with pride, her blue eyes radiant with anticipation of praise. She was Tom's widow, the little wife he had trusted to his mother's love. I kissed her tenderly, and only said:

"'You must not tire yourself so much, dear.'

"'Oh, no!' she cried with enthusiasm. 'I am going to do all the doors in the house. Isn't it beautiful?'

"I groaned in spirit, but consoled myself by hoping that some new fancy would spare my grand old oaken doors. And my hopes were verified. Daisy tired of panel painting when the dining-room was finished, and last spring I had the doors planed down. They are a little thinner, but will polish up to the old tone in time.

She came down to tea looking frightened at her own temerity.

"But after that day Willie was more cautious about her undertakings, though more devoted to her. She had been with me then nearly three years, and she had recovered from her first grief. She was very young—not twenty when Tom died—and looking like a little girl. So when she shyly ventured upon a white dress and some blue ribbons, and came down to tea looking frightened at her own temerity, I said lovingly:

"'What a pretty dress, and how pretty my Daisy looks in it!'

"'You don't think it is forgetting Tom, do you?' she asked with quivering lips.

"'I am quite sure you will never forget Tom,' I said kindly, for she was trembling all over, 'but I am sure that Tom loved you too well to wish your young life spent in mourning—even for him. It is natural for you to be joyous, dear, and nothing gives me so much pleasure as to hear you sing or smile.'

"'Ah, Tom was right when he said you would be good to me!' she said gratefully. She was a grateful little thing always.

"She had been wearing her blue ribbons for some months, when the scrap-picture and card-collecting mania set in. I bore my portion of the martyrdom as valiantly as I could. I saw a precious little Chinese jar, that was an heirloom, plastered over with butterflies and grotesque heads, and varnished, and did not faint. I endured patiently when a costly Japanese vase, a present from a dear old friend, shared the same fate; but at last the traditional straw was laid upon the camel's back."

I looked at the dear old face, lighted by a half comical twinkle of the eyes, and wondered where such angelic patience could have given way.

"One of my boys," said the old lady, "my Paul, was a surgeon in the Navy, and from every voyage he brought me treasures that became sacred when he sailed away and never returned. Amongst these doubly precious possessions was a sandal-wood table—a masterpiece of carving—with a top polished like marble. The heavy centre leg branched off into feet of carved leaves, supporting the centre, which was carved into an exquisite garland of flowers twisted round a tree trunk. But the beauty of the wood itself was the only ornament of the flat top. The table stood in a room off the parlour that was seldom used, unless we had company, and I never imagined it in any danger until, coming in rather unexpectedly from a walk, I saw Willie's head and Daisy's bent over it. I hurried into the room. Oh, my dear! The whole beautiful top was covered with hideous advertising cards, nailed on with brass-headed tacks.

"'Oh, mother,' Daisy cried, 'don't come in! It is not finished!'

"'How dare you touch that?' I cried, and then wept like a baby. 'Paul's table!' I sobbed. 'You have ruined it!'

"It was the first time I had ever spoken harshly to her, and she was like a child.

"'Oh, Willie,' she said, 'she is angry, and I thought she would be so pleased!'

"Willie was equal to the emergency. He took her into his arms, and cried in great indignation:

"'It is a shame! Don't cry, Daisy! Oh, Daisy, be my wife, and you may nail scrap-pictures on every table in my house!'

"Did you ever hear of such a proposal? Two babies, my dear. But they have been very happy, and there is not any æsthetic horror wanting in their home. Storks on one leg, reeds, sunflowers, lilies, dadoes and freizes. But there is a third baby now, nearly a year old. I expect to hear of that infant in classic costume, with a lyre in her hands, some day; but I can bear it. My responsibilities came to an end when Daisy ceased to be Tom's widow."

BASIL MANNERS.

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A BATCH OF CONFESSIONS.

"Well, sir, I understand that you have lost four hundred pounds in hard cash and bank notes; but you will excuse me if I venture to say that you have not put the facts before me quite clearly. Your natural annoyance at the loss of the money has so upset you that you are——"

"Annoyance!" interrupted the head of the firm. "Why it's four months' profit! I'm more than annoyed. What's the good of making a long rigmarole about it? You are a detective and are put on this case. There is only one person who could have done it; do your duty and arrest him!"

Detective-Sergeant Dodds coughed drily.

"We do not go altogether by what is probable," he observed, "It sometimes happens that the most likely man to have committed a crime is just the one who did not do it."

"Well, the facts are these," replied Mr. Robert Jennings, trading as "Jennings and Co.," as it was usually recorded on legal documents. "Yesterday afternoon I received a wire to the effect that a certain transaction—an ordinary one in my business, although not occuring very often—was completed, and I must be prepared to pay cash by ten o'clock this morning. It was just too late to get a cheque cashed. I had only a few pounds here, so after some trouble I managed to get a business friend or two to make up the amount by honouring my cheques. It was placed in my safe, and only two of us knew that the money was in the office—myself and my chief clerk, Henry Garrard, who has the duplicate key of the safe.

"Although I had perfect confidence in Garrard, I had a feeling of impending trouble when I got up this morning, and I left home for the office earlier than usual, arriving here at nine o'clock exactly. Garrard gets here a little after nine, but this morning he was already in the office when I arrived, and I saw at once that something was wrong. I soon learnt that the money had been stolen."

"Were there signs of disturbance?" asked the detective, as the other paused.

"None at all, for the simple reason that the safe had been opened with a key. It's as clear as daylight against him, and I can't see why you want all these details."

"Did you find anything incriminating about the office?"

"After he had absconded—but I suppose you want it all in proper order. I soon taxed him with the robbery, but he denied it. He was terribly upset and looked as guilty as a man could look. I was beside myself with anxiety, and while I was tearing my hair in my little private office and looking blankly at the safe as though it was some horrible dream, he was off. After he was gone, this packet of unpaid bills was found on the floor of the outer room, close to the recess where he hung his coat and hat."

The detective took the packet and glanced at the bills; then he put them into his pocket.

"I know that a man has been sent to his house to arrest Garrard, but he had, of course, not returned. I should like to have a look round the offices," said Dodds in a matter-of-fact way.

He made an apparently superficial examination of the place, but his keen eyes took in everything, even to the appearance of the two clerks and the office boy. He stooped down when near the safe, and picked up a shred of dress-material.

"You employ a woman to clean the offices?" he inquired.

"They are swept and dusted by the boy," replied Mr. Jennings. "A woman comes once a week, but she wasn't here last night."

"And you don't employ a lady clerk?"

"No. What have you found?"

"It looks like a piece of a woman's dress," was the reply of the detective as he placed the shred carefully in his pocket-book. "There seems to be more in this than you suppose, Mr. Jennings. You see, the most probable solution of a problem is not always a correct one."

"On the contrary, this discovery, and the finding of the bills, tend to prove Garrard's guilt, detective," rejoined Mr. Jennings, somewhat testily. "I believe him to be most respectable, but I hear this morning that he has a very extravagant wife. The bills confirm that—they are all from establishments for ladies' things, and the totals are certainly high for a man in his position. That shred, however, suggests some other form of expense."

"But did he stay here after the others had gone?"

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"Oh, yes, he often stayed late to keep the work up."

"For which he received extra pay, naturally, and so increased his income?" remarked Dodds. He knew that it was not so—Jennings & Co. had a reputation for being anything but liberal, but he said that to have a sly dig at the principal. The latter pretended not to hear it.

"Well, sir, I think I have all the information you can give me and I will work it up. By the way, though, did you have a call for the money this morning?"

"Yes," said Jennings, "and paid it. Had to keep the man till the Bank was opened."

"Ah!" ejaculated Dodds. "Well, I'll get to the bottom of this for you, Mr. Jennings."

"Get me my money back, and I'll give you ten pounds," cried the gentleman.

"You are very liberal, sir," was the quiet answer. "But I am paid by the authorities for doing my work, thank you!"

And he went off.

An hour later, Dodds was in the best room of the apartments occupied by the Garrards. In front of him stood Mrs. Garrard, her pretty face flushed and anxious, and presenting a strange contrast to the quiet, composed features of Detective-Sergeant Dodds. She had her hand upon the handle of the door as though to prevent him from passing into another room.

"It is quite useless for you to attempt to interfere with the course of the law, Mrs. Garrard," said Dodds, in a not unkindly tone. "Besides, I think you will find it in your husband's interest to further my inquiries."

"You have come to arrest him," she answered, her voice trembling with agitation. "You cannot call that 'in his interest.'"

"You say he is ill in bed; still, I must see him. And, as you must know, you can do nothing. However," added the detective as a thought struck him, "perhaps you can answer a few of the questions and so throw light on the mystery and spare Mr. Garrard some trouble. Sit down."

The wife reluctantly released her hold on the door-handle, and sat down on a chair opposite the officer.

"You know from what I have already told you," began Dodds, "that appearances are dead against your husband. There is reason to believe that he has been very extravagant of late, and it is a fact that he has been pressed for money. I have evidence here" (he drew out the packet of bills) "which confirms it."

"Let me see the bills," she cried, holding out her hand for them. "But these bills give no particulars of what they are for," she added, after a glance at them.

"No," replied Dodds. "They are what are called 'statements'; that is, they are reminders that goods have not been paid for. But you see that they are from establishments for ladies' things."

Mrs. Garrard's face, which had lost some of its colour during the conversation, now became red again. Her hand trembled as she gave them back to the detective, but she said nothing.

"There is—hem!—another piece of evidence, which—Can you throw any light on this fact? I found a shred of the material of a lady's dress near the safe in the office." And he held it up before her eyes.

"Yes," she rejoined in a decided manner. "It is mine."

The detective prided himself on being able to hide his feelings under any conditions, but he nearly betrayed his surprise in this instance. He had not expected this development.

"I was in the office last night," continued Mrs. Garrard. "I have been there occasionally when my husband has had to stop late—which is very often. I helped him to put the books away last night."

Dodds looked straight in her eyes as though he would read her soul. Her eyes dropped.

"You are aware that you have the reputation of being an expensive wife for a man in Mr. Garrard's position," he said, his eyes still fixed upon her. "Did you know that the money was in the safe?"

"No, she didn't!" said a voice at the door.

Henry Garrard pushed it open and walked in.

"You may spare yourself any further trouble, officer," he said as he stretched out his hands. "I have heard

She had her hand upon the handle of the door.

most of what you have said. I confess to having taken the money in order to pay those bills and meet other expenses. The temptation was too great for me. Put on the handcuffs and take me away."

Both his wife and the officer had risen at his entrance; the former uttered an agonised cry, "Oh, Harry!" while the latter shrugged his shoulders and mechanically drew forth the manacles.

Garrard, standing in the centre of the room, presented the appearance of a man just able to leave his bed after a severe illness. It seemed incredible that a man could alter so in the space of a few hours. He had great difficulty in keeping on his feet, his eyes were sunken in their sockets and bloodshot, his face was without a vestige of colour. Dodds put the handcuffs back again; there would be no trouble with this man.

"Take this chair while I send for a cab," he said. Then he turned to the window and beckoned to an officer on the other side of the street.

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When Dodds turned round, he found the self-accused man reclining limply in an easy chair and his wife pacing up and down the room wringing her hands. The detective glanced from one to the other with a dubious expression.

"I must take him," he breathed to himself, "but I don't believe that confession! I should be more inclined to believe a confession from *her*. I'll sift this to the bottom or my name's not Joshua!"

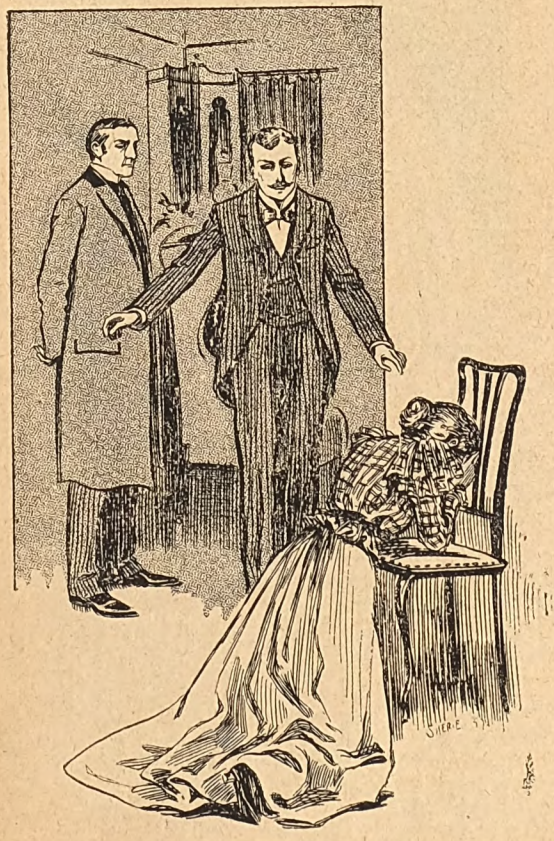
As though she divined his thoughts, Mrs. Garrard stopped short and faced him boldly.

"It is on me that you must put the handcuffs, detective," she said in a voice that was firm, almost defiant. "*I* took the money; my husband knows nothing about the theft and has told a lie to save me. I have been an extravagant woman; I have been fond of dress and pleasure above my station; and I took advantage of my knowledge and my opportunity to rob the safe while pretending to assist him last night. Heaven help me! I have brought ruin and misery on him and on myself!"

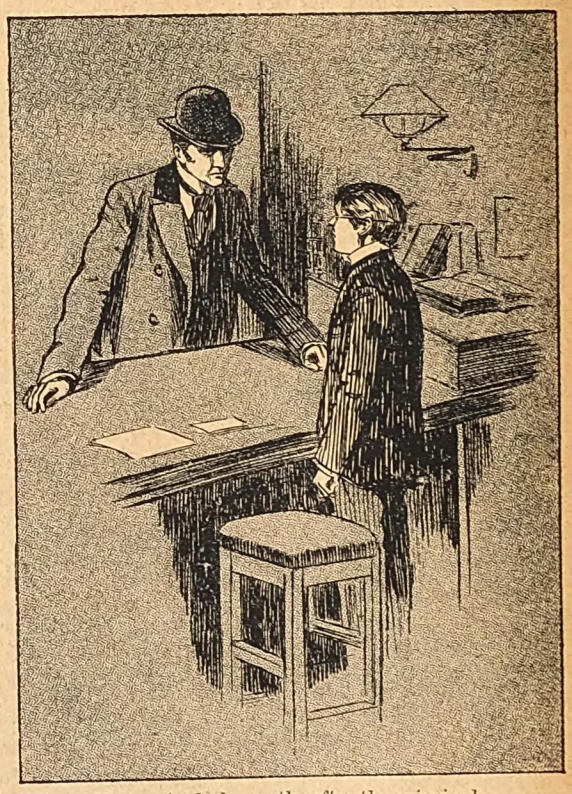
The wretched woman fell on her knees and buried her face in her hands.

One glance at Garrard was sufficient to convince the officer that the man's confession was a lie, that he had uttered it to save his wife. There was no need to put the question to him, but Dodds did it unconsciously.

"Then what you have said is untrue. You were trying to shield your wife?"



The wretched woman fell on her knees.



He inquired pleasantly after the principal.

"Yes," responded Garrard feebly, "I told a lie; I know nothing of the robbery. This is killing me."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and another plain-clothes officer entered and informed Dodds that the cab was waiting. Dodds instructed his subordinate to do what he could for Garrard, who had fainted at the thought of his wife's being taken away, and then went off with his prisoner.

Detective-Sergeant Dodds was not comfortable about the safe robbery at the offices of Jennings & Co. Mrs. Garrard had been up before the magistrate and remanded after some formal evidence had been given. She had refused to say where the money had been secreted, although Mr. Jennings had promised not to press the case if she would do so.

In the pursuit of his investigations, Dodds had made a disquieting discovery; he had been to the establishments whose names were on the statements found in the office, and in every case he had been informed that there was something wrong, that there was no account in the name of Garrard, paid or unpaid.

"If we have supplied Mr. or Mrs. Garrard with goods, it has been a cash transaction," was the tenour of the replies he had received.

In three cases, for the three largest sums, the statements were declared to be fictitious; the handwriting was unknown; the forms must have been fraudulently obtained and the entries made up.

"There is something deeper in this than I at first supposed," muttered the detective. "But what about the confessions? Is it a got-up affair in which these two are engaged with someone else? I can't see the point

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of that, though. Any way, there's something deep in it, and you've got to make it clear, J. Dodds."

How was it with the four other forms — for small amounts — which made up the packet? Dodds turned into a restaurant where he was known, took a seat at a corner table, and examined the spot on the statements covered by the name "Garrard." An attentive examination with his pocket microscope showed that some other name had been obliterated by means of a chemical substance and the "Garrard," written in imitation of the rest of the handwriting. There was no difficulty about the obliteration; from time to time such chemical substances are hawked about offices for sale to clerks.

"If I go back to these shops and ask them to run through their accounts and find out to whom these bills were made out," mused the officer, "they will do it, but they will think I was silly not to have thought of it before. And it must be admitted, Joshua Dodds Esq., that you have been a little dull in this case! Then, it will take time, and perhaps the name will not reveal anything after all. What's at the bottom of it? I suppose I must go back to these establishments and then to Jennings & Co. Perhaps I had better go to the firm first? Yes. I will."

"That will do," cried Dodds warningly.

When Dodds reached the offices of Jennings & Co. he found that the office boy was in charge. He inquired pleasantly after the principal and was informed that his movements were uncertain; whereupon it occurred to him that he would wait a little. So he walked up and down the office and entered into conversation with the boy, who was quite pleased at the great man's condescension. When Detective-Sergeant Joshua Dodds left the building fifteen or twenty minutes later, he was whistling softly in a way that indicated either pleasure or surprise.

"Some persons say that detectives would never find out anything if chance did not help them," he soliloquised as he stepped out briskly. "It is true that we are assisted a great deal by something that may be so styled, but *I* say it's Providence. Why did I go there first? Chance? Not a bit of it! It was quite providential. It is Providence that makes such fine smart men as myself join the force; it must be, for there's precious little to induce us to join. It is all arranged so that justice shall be done. And *I* will see that it is done in this case!"

He visited each of the four establishments and soon placed the book-keepers on the track of the account he wanted. Yes, the account agreed with the statement in his possession in all four instances.

Dodds was busy paying visits for an hour and a half, and when he had completed his round he went straight to the offices of Jennings and Co.

Mr. Jennings was in. He was about to depart for the day, but he took off his hat and coat and bade the officer welcome.

"I suppose you have got no nearer finding my money?" he asked moodily.

"Yes, I have. That's the object of my visit," returned Dodds.

"O-oh! Indeed!" Jennings' voice was somewhat shaky and he looked anxiously at the detective.

"You don't appear very pleased, Mr. Jennings," remarked Dodds quietly.

"Yes, I am," said Jennings, recovering himself. "But I was so surprised."

"So was I."

"Where—I mean, what have you learnt?"

"This," replied the officer, shutting the door and locking it. "Three hundred pounds of the money was paid into the Longton Bank the morning after the robbery, to the account of Richard Jackson, which names begin with the same letters as Robert Jennings. Isn't it funny that when people assume other names, they usually take names with the same initials as their own? Have you ever noticed that, Mr. Jennings? The other hundred pounds was paid into the same bank this morning. You find it handy to keep a special private account at another bank, and in another name, so that nobody shall know anything about it, do you not?"

The head of the firm of Jennings & Co. had sat like one in a daze, while the officer had been speaking. He now jumped up with a terrible curse.

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"That will do," cried Dodds warningly, his hand going to a pocket in his waistcoat. "It's all up. I've discovered the whole of your little game. You have played and lost, so you must take the consequences."

Jennings sank back in his chair with a groan.

"The only thing which isn't clear to me is, why you were villain enough to try to fix the crime on Garrard; why you didn't arrange it in some other way. But that doesn't matter, now that I can clear those wretched people."

Finding that he was caught without hope of escape, Jennings broke down entirely and made a clean breast of it. He had been speculating and had lost. He had speculated partly with a sum of three hundred and fifty pounds which he held as treasurer for a local fund, and he must show that he held it, three or four days from the date of the robbery. He had that sum of money in his "office" bank (as Dodds styled it), but that was really wanted to pay an overdue account on the morrow, or his credit would be gone. In his despair at the loss, which had been made known to him that very morning, he hastily concocted a scheme, and to carry it out he had sacrificed Garrard. He had placed the statements in the office; he had obtained the three fictitious forms and had altered the name on the others, which were genuine ones made out to himself. He knew Garrard's difficulty with his wife, who had occasionally bought goods without his knowledge. He fastened the crime on Garrard because this plan required it, and that scheme was the best he could evoke.

"It was rather a clumsy plot," said the detective, "but circumstances helped you wonderfully. I never suspected you; you played your part very well in front of me. You see the advantage of being agreeable. If I had not been agreeable to your office boy I should never have drawn from him permission to see the little bottle of stuff for erasing ink marks and mistakes which you kept in your desk. He volunteered the information when I asked casually if any of the clerks ever used such stuff. And if I hadn't peeped into your desk, I shouldn't have seen the other bill which you had forgotten to put with the rest, nor the half of the cheque which you had drawn on the Longton Bank and then torn in halves. Why didn't you destroy those things? Because Providence helps us detectives to discover crime."

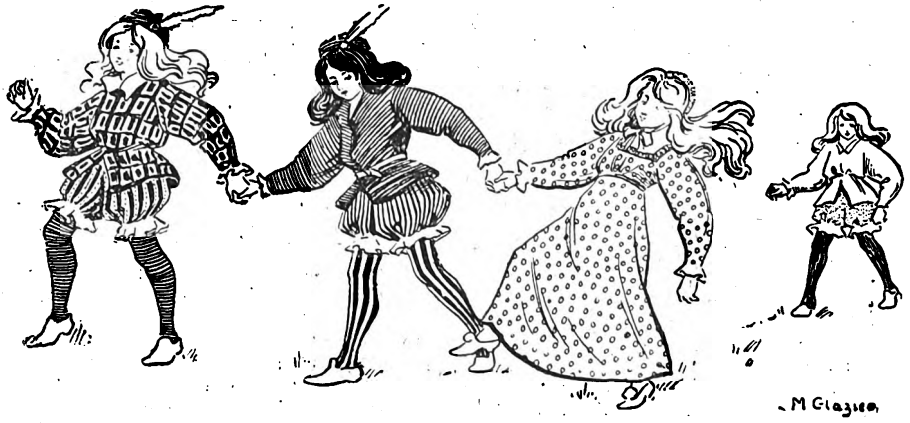
Jennings having made a clean breast of it, Mrs. Garrard was released. Jennings himself evaded justice by suicide.

The confessions were easily explained. Garrard thought his wife had committed the robbery to satisfy her love of dress and gaiety, and had determined to suffer in her stead, and so save her; whereas Mrs. Garrard, believing that he had done it for her sake, and because she had taunted him many times with not having a better position, decided in her remorse to take the crime upon herself.

"Well," said Dodds to them, when it was all over, "I never had a case with so many confessions before, and I shall be very careful of confessions after this! Now, Mrs. Garrard, I hope this trial will be a lesson to you. You've got a good husband; be contented!"

That is three years ago, and there is good evidence that the lesson has been taken to heart.

G. E. LINGEN.



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THE TECHNIQUE OF PROPOSING.

YOUNG KENDALL walked along the street rather less briskly than usual. His hopes were blighted for ever. He had just asked a girl to marry him and had been rejected. She was a nice girl; he had known her for three years, and for two of them he had been, in his subconsciousness, looking forward to this day—not this day as it had turned out, but as it ought to have turned out.

When he came to Knightsbridge he paused an instant, debating whether to go down to his club, or into the Park. For some reason the club seemed to offer fewer attractions than usual, and he concluded to go into the Park.

It was a perfect January day, clear and crisp. There were more carriages in the Park than usual, and Kendall knew a good many of the occupants. As he recognised the various familiar faces and raised his hat in acknowledgment of the different smiles of greeting directed his way, it occurred to him how self-possessed women always were; how self-possessed *she* was, while he was all tangled up in his rhetoric and oratory. He seated himself absently on one of the chairs provided for the delectation of weary pilgrims, and, regardless of Park regulations, began to flip off with his cane the ends of some of the prescribed twigs near by; his face reddened again as he recalled her coolness and composure when he had intimated that her refusal struck the sun from his heaven and made his future a blank.

"It's delightful to sit down for a little and cool off, after walking in this sultry weather, don't you think?" said a fresh, cordial young voice at his elbow; and, turning, he became aware of the fact that Hope Brewster had taken the vacant place beside him, and was smiling at him out of her frank, clear eyes, a disarming smile that he could not resent even in his present mood of cynical dejection. Hope was different from the other girls, more original, independent and individual. She had grown up with boys and could do all the things they could. She did things now that a girl of a less secure social position could not have dared to do; the "Miss Brewster" part of her name covered the multitude of little sins against the conventionalities which were committed by "Hope." She was a girl whom the young men all liked, but never made love to. She sat beside Kendall now as naturally and unconcernedly as if she had been a fellow member of one of his clubs. She wore a military coat with a turned-up collar, and a sailor hat that always had a jaunty look on her bright head.

"Isn't it a beautiful day?" she inquired invitingly, gazing with interest at the passers-by.

"Fine," assented Kendall, with the enthusiasm of the menagerie polar bear in July.

"Lots of people out," pursued the young lady cheerfully, tapping her small boots briskly on the path to keep up circulation.

"Lots," agreed Kendall, without manifesting a disproportionate degree of warmth on the subject.

"You don't seem to be very pleased this afternoon. Has anything gone wrong?" was Miss Hope's next venture, as she turned and faced him, giving him the benefit of one of her direct glances.

"You are mistaken," said her companion, with some stiffness. "I was never in better spirits in my life."

Hope smiled at him.

"They seem like good spirits," she observed; "the mirth and hilarity exhibited by the plumes on a hearse. I'll tell you what I believe the trouble with you is, Jack, You have been proposing to Madeline Arnold, and she has refused you!"

If Kendall had not come of a warrior race, he would have been unable to stand this sudden audacious fire without flinching. But blood will tell, when it is really blood and not simply the colourless sap of hypothetic pedigree trees, and the young man did not turn renegade at the first danger signal.

"What makes you think so?" he inquired, with a passable show of indifference.

"Why," explained Hope, nothing daunted, "it's one of those things that come by intuition. I can't tell you any reason. I simply know that nothing short of being a rejected suitor could possibly bring you to the dismal pass I see you in to-day. And when we got that far, the rest is plain sailing; for every one has known for a year and more that your heavenly constellations have risen and set in a certain house not far from here, and that to all other luminaries you are totally blind. She's a lovely girl, Jack. She's my best friend, and I am on your side. Now what made her refuse you?"

"Why, of course," said Kendall, yielding to the superior tactics of the enemy with something like relief; for, after all, there was a melancholy comfort in talking to a sympathetic and comprehending soul like this. "Why, of course, I'm not half good enough for her, and——"

"Well, you knew that before, didn't you?" interrupted Miss Hope sharply; "and yet you went on and asked her just the same. You thought she would give you a different answer. You know you did."

"I hoped—" began Kendall correctingly.

"Precisely. You hoped she was not averse to you, and every one else thought so. I thought so. The course of true love progresses with ideal smoothness up to the point of to-day, and then everything suddenly goes to pieces without warning. There must be some reason for this, and I can think of only one that is tenable; you must have done it the wrong way."

"Done it the wrong way?" repeated Kendall stupidly. "Done what wrong?"

"The asking, of course. You must have gone at it in some senseless way that spoilt everything. I haven't a doubt of it myself," and Hope smiled blandly at some one she knew in a carriage that was passing, and looked as if she were saying something quite different.

"But," protested the young man, roused by various considerations and inferences to indignant combativeness, "granting what you seem so sure of, that I have made a fool of myself, you don't mean to tell me that a moment's stupidity, a casual blunder, would upset a girl's entire opinion of a man? That is a little too much, Miss Hope, even from you!"

"It does seem queer," Hope admitted candidly; "but you know we women aren't always swayed by reason, but often by that indefinable thing which is called by all sorts of names, from intuition to impulse. It is a really serious matter to say the words that mean one is going to marry a man, you know; and the moment before she says them, a girl sees all the *cons* a great

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deal more plainly than she ever did before in her life. And if, just at that juncture, a man doesn't act and speak in exactly the way that appeals to that particular girl's nature, why, it's all up with him and with her, too, before they know it. I haven't a doubt that you did it quite as you shouldn't have done it for Madeline. For instance, you probably intimated to her, more than once, that you were utterly unworthy even to open her carriage door for her; didn't you?"

"Well, naturally, since it is true——"

"And that she is the only girl on earth you have ever looked at, or ever will look at, or that you can imagine any one else wishing to look at, for all time?"

"Why shouldn't I have said so? She probably knew it, at any rate."

"And that the reason for this is self-evident, because she is so superior, so thoughtful, so deep, so literary, so transcendently different, in short, from all the rest of human kind?"

"She is all that and a great deal more, and I am glad I told her my opinion."

"And doubtless you added that without her your future would be empty and colourless, your life a complete wreck, eternity itself a matter of indifference to you."

"Now, look here," said young Kendall, growing unpleasantly warm even in the sharp air of midwinter. "I don't know how you can guess all this, unless you have had it tried on yourself, and I'm not saying it is what happened at all. But whatever took place is over and past, and all there is now for me is to brace up and get used to it. There is nothing to be gained by talking about it any further. Shall we walk on?"

"Oh, yes, there is use," said his companion sweetly. "It isn't every man that is fortunate enough, when he has made a mistake, to have a girl to help him out of it. I mean to help you, Jack. I want you to go round and do it again."

"Do it again?" he gasped, feeling all his powers of speech reduced to a weak repetition of her words. "Do it again, Hope?"

"Yes, in the right way. Now let me tell you your mistake. You were too subservient. You made her everything and yourself nothing. You deified her until she couldn't help thinking there must be something in it, and wondering if, perhaps, she might not be this creature of fire and soul you depicted. You made her lose her perspective, and then, instead of erecting your own image in corresponding statuesque proportions, you actually made light of yourself. You were not strong enough, for, don't you see, a woman doesn't want a little or humble person to be the one to whom she gives so much. She wants him to love and revere her, it is true, but he must be head and shoulders above her, at the same time. Probably, also, you were nervous and embarrassed and awkward. You ought to have been calm and self-possessed and dignified. Nothing conveys the idea of weakness so much as nervousness; and a woman will forgive anything sooner than weakness. In a word, you should have offered to take her, instead of pleading to be taken by her. Do you see? You were in the wrong part. You were not true to yourself nor to real manhood, and she divined it with that something in her woman's nature which will act as an attracting or repelling force all her life long."

"I believe you are right. Upon my word, I do," said her listener rather heavily. "But what is done is done, and nothing can undo it."

"Nothing can undo your bad quarter of an hour; but pluck and energy may give you a good one. What you must do is to go straight back there and begin over again. Yes," added Hope hastily, seeing the dissent in his face and attitude, "that will introduce such an element of novelty and originality that if she cares for you—mind, I say if she cares—she will be taken off her feet, and you will have it all your own way. If she really doesn't care for you, matters will be no worse than they are now. Will you do it?"

Hope spoke eagerly, and the glow and fervour of her enthusiasm produced a corresponding warmth in her companion. He thought for a moment, then said, in the firm, deliberate accent Columbus might have used when he announced his intention of discovering America:

"Yes, I'll do it."

"Good!" exclaimed Hope. "Now be sure you get into the right frame of mind this time. Take it for granted that she cares for you; remember that you are worth a good deal yourself, and that a great many people think there is no one like you. Finally, if she refuses you absolutely—I don't think she will, but you can never be utterly sure of what a woman will do—let her see that you are a strong, self-reliant man, who is, it is true, deeply disappointed, but who will go out from her presence and continue to build his life, clean and true and upright, a life which is to be, quite independently of her, worth while. Do you feel this way, Jack?"

"Well, I believe I could act the part. Ah, by the way, Miss Hope, supposing I practise up a bit on you?"

"On me?" It was Hope's turn to repeat words.

"Yes, so that you can see if I've the right idea and could carry it out properly, you know. You've got me into this thing, and you might as well see if I'm in correct trim to make a success of it."

"Well," said Hope doubtfully, "of course if it will help you at all. Go ahead; I'll be Madeline. What will you say when she comes into the reception-room?"

"I shall say; 'Excuse me for coming again, Miss Arnold, but I found, on going away, that I had forgotten something.'"

"Oh, did you leave something here?" asked Hope's Miss Arnold, in chilling tones. They seemed to put the breath of life into Kendall's courage, and his voice rang out with manly decision.

"Yes, I left you here and the answer I want. I think the first part of this afternoon was a bad dream, and I've come back to have you awaken me, and tell me so. There's no use, Madeline. I will not have 'no' for an answer."

Kendall had forgotten Hope, and was gazing into space with fire and determination in his face.

"I think we finished all that a little while ago, Mr. Kendall. If you haven't anything else to say to me, perhaps I had better leave you (I've got to be cold for her.)"

"So you will not leave me until you have heard me tell you in full all the reasons why you were wrong in giving me the answer you did before," said Kendall firmly. "In the first place, you are all the world to me. In the second place, I know that you—oh, never mind any more, Miss Hope; I can't do it to you, after all; but I can see exactly how it goes, and I am just in the mood for it. Of course that is the way to meet her, bless her. I was a fool for acting so like a cowardly cad before. Any woman would despise it. I think I'll go there at once, Miss Hope, if you don't mind. Are you walking my way?"

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"No," said Hope, rising with him and adjusting herself to the sudden quickstep in the march of events. "I'm going up by the Serpentine. Good-bye, Jack, and good luck to you." And she smiled and nodded encouragingly at him as they shook hands at parting.

Kendall walked rapidly away, his head up and his shoulders well back. He had not noticed before how perfect his surroundings were. The exquisite colouring of the wintry sky brought out to full advantage the grace of the tree forms silhouetted against it; everything seemed to smile good cheer at him; even the palatial "mansions" and shops wore a face of kindliness and substantial comfort; they seemed like encouraging friends, beckoning him on.

His feeling of hope and confidence amounted almost to conviction that he was walking straight upon success. Truth to tell, however, it was not until he stood face to face with the familiar doors, and had mechanically touched the unassuming but portentious bell push that the full realisation of his act took possession of him. Then, nothing but his sturdy warrior blood kept him from precipitate flight; it was aided and abetted by the fact that the door was almost instantly opened; and he entered the house like one walking up to a cannon's mouth in a nightmare.

He was conscious of a singular lack of equilibrium, both physical and mental, to which his nervousness of the earlier part of the afternoon was a trifling matter; he was annoyed to find that he had an unusual sensation in the region of the bronchial tubes, and, to rid himself of it, cleared his throat once or twice in a careless, matter-of-fact way; he tried not to let himself get out of that proper frame of mind, which Hope had said was so important, and kept assuring himself encouragingly that if he could only begin all right, he should sail through surprisingly well, as he had done in the Park, to which end he repeated several times the first sentences he had used in his recent rehearsal.

Then he began to wonder why she did not come down, and convinced that he had been waiting an inordinate length of time, a sudden wild gleam of hope shot across his sky—perhaps she was not at home. He was just pulling himself together at this thought, when the heavy curtains at the door were pushed aside, and she entered.

"Excuse me for coming again, Miss Arnold," he repeated with punctilious preciseness, gazing haughtily at the opposite wall, "but I found on getting away that I had forgotten something."

"Oh, did you leave something here?" inquired the young lady, in a voice which, not altogether steady, seemed to accord with a certain unusual expression in her eyes. Kendall, for the first time in all their intercourse, not noticing her, owing to his sudden absorbing interest in a beautiful etching near him, realised that this was the moment to take the citadel by storm, and answered, with all the eloquence he could at the moment command:

"Yes; when I got away, I began to think I—to realise that when I was here—that two hours ago—to feel sure that after all—if you would give me the opportunity and not be too hard on me—in short" (with a desperate spurt) "to determine that I would come back and tell you that I"—his eyes, having left the etching, had fallen upon a small table across the room; Heaven is said to help those who help themselves, and Kendall's mettle had been proved—"that I had left my note-book here!" he finished in triumph, walking to the table and possessing himself of the little leather-bound article of such stragetic importance.

"Oh," said Miss Arnold, in a strange tone, drawing a quick breath. "Did you come back for that? I should have sent it to you when it was discovered; but perhaps you needed it at once?"

"I—yes; I needed it this afternoon," replied Kendall, feeling a great load off his mind, and speaking almost easily. "It contains some figures I wished to use at the club, and of course that reminded me of it."

"I am sorry you have been so inconvenienced," she said, somewhat laboriously. "It is a long distance to the club. Isn't it very cold for walking?"

"Better for walking than for driving, I should say," he responded, pocketing his note-book and moving towards the door; "I actually pitied those girls in the Park. They showed pluck, never a white feather, but they must have been freezing. I have yet to see a physical discomfort that a girl can't face if it is necessary in order for her to do the correct thing."

"The Park?" repeated Madeline. "You surely haven't been to the Park, too, in this short time?"

"Oh—" Kendall hesitated; "well, yes; I went there on the way."

Then, having reached the door, and wishing to avoid opportunity for what he would have called further "breaks," he turned to say adieu. Madeline's response was oddly irrelevant.

"Are you sure," she said in a strained, unnatural manner, and with apparent effort, "sure that you haven't anything else to say?"

"Well, I can't think of anything more," said Kendall amiably, in whose breast a great relief at having passed his ordeal had made every other feeling subordinate; "it was awfully stupid of me to forget my note-book, and I am sorry to have troubled you; that's all. I will promise not to do it again," and he turned once more to go.

"Oh," cried Madeline, in a voice that was a wail, as she sank despairingly upon a couch and buried her head among the cushions, "then you don't care for me after all!"

* * * * *

"And do you know, Jack," she was saying to him a quarter of an hour later, when they were both sitting on the couch, and she had abandoned the cushions, "five minutes after I had been so horrid to you, and you had gone, I was crying my heart out, and willing to give worlds to have you back. Only I knew you would never ask me again. And Hope Brewster dropped in, and I was too miserable to fabricate, so I told her all about it. She said she was sure it would turn out all right, but you see I knew you better, and I assured her you would never give me another chance—never. And the facts have proved I was right, for I had to do the second proposing myself, didn't I? Won't Hope be surprised when she knows it all!"

"And wouldn't you be surprised if you knew it all?" reflected Kendall, as he looked down contentedly into the face of the "dearest girl in the world." "Yes, of the trio, I am the only one who knows all the sides, and who is not in for surprises."

But he would have been the most surprised of any of them had he at that moment seen, at a lonelier spot along the Serpentine, a certain lonely little figure standing, a drooping, girlish figure in a military coat with a turned-up collar, and a sailor hat which had lost its usual jauntiness, for the bright head was resting dejectedly on the iron railing, and the girl was weeping as though her heart would break.

ESTHER NOANES.

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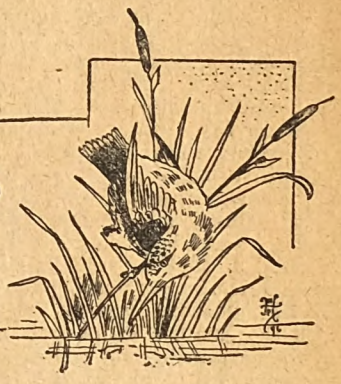
Uncle Benjamin's Parrot.



It was getting late in the evening of the third day before Christmas, when there came a violent pull at our front-door bell, and on the door being opened Uncle Benjamin, covered with snow and out of breath from fighting against the wind, entered. "Oh, what weather! What weather!" he puffed and gasped as he kicked off his wet goloshes, and recklessly scattered the snow from his overcoat on the clothes which were hanging in the hall. "I should so like a cup of coffee. It wouldn't disturb you too much to make me one, would it?"

Of course it didn't disturb us, no more did Uncle Benjamin, who was soon snugly installed in a comfortable seat by the fire.

"Oh, uncle, shut your eyes!" cried my wife suddenly. "Your Christmas present is lying there on the table near you. How could I be so careless! Please don't look that way."

He did as requested—shut his kindly little eyes, and waited patiently until my wife said: "Now, all right."

"How kind of you to think of a present for me," he said. "One good turn deserves another, and I want to give you something, too, but I'll be hanged if I know what."

For a short time he sat with his head in his hands looking fixedly in front of him. Then all at once, bringing his fist down on the table, he said:

"If I only had that parrot I should be all right!"

"Parrot?" I asked astonished. "What parrot are you talking about?"

Uncle Benjamin looked at me jovially.

"Don't you know the story? Really? Well, then, you shall hear it. But first of all give me another cup of coffee. You are a well-read man, nephew, so you ought to know there is nothing like a good cup of coffee and a good luncheon to set a man talking."

When the beverage was ready and Uncle Benjamin had thoroughly tested it by several hearty draughts and had then expressed his satisfaction, he began his story:

"It happened several years ago. After much hoping and waiting, Christmas Day had finally arrived. For several days before a continual stream of presents from relatives and friends had been steadily flowing in, while on Christmas morning quite a number of folks to whom I had scarcely given a thought sent me kindly remembrances, so that I felt proud and happy, and I said to myself: 'Benjamin, my boy, you must be rather a nice sort of fellow, after all, if these people are so fond of you as to send you Christmas presents.' I had already arranged with mother (for she was living then) how we would pile up all the presents under the Christmas tree in the evening—you know, all reasonable people become children at Christmas—when another present was brought in. It was from a man whom I had not seen for years, and whom I had thought of very seldom—my friend, Karl Kierbaum, who was in America. What in the world prompted him to send me anything I could not for the life of me imagine; still less how a man who was in general so reasonable, could send me a parrot, the ugliest bird in creation. The one which I got was the ugliest of its kind, and was, in addition, an ill-tempered, ill-behaved bird. It began by biting my finger, and as soon as it was taken out of the cage, set to work to destroy the carpet.

"I hate all birds, except those which are roasted, of course; then I like them well enough when the gravy is all right. Well, how could I be expected to fall in love with that hateful specimen, which screeched the sharpest words and behaved like a lagan? My wife naturally thought it a dear little thing, and would have been delighted to have it in the bedroom, just like children with their Christmas toys. But I insisted that the parrot should either be taken into the cellar or else chained in the dog kennel. In the latter place it might at least have served to warn its lord and master of approaching danger, like the geese of the Capitol. My wife objected that the parrot would freeze and that it would be brutal to cause the death of the poor, harmless creature. That I finally admitted, but maintained that it should not be housed in the bedroom.

"'Well,' said my wife finally, 'what shall we do?'

"'Can't the bird be roasted?' I asked.

"Upon which my dear better half threatened to lay the case before the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, so I saw that it would be necessary to find some other way out of the difficulty. At noon an inspiration came to me.

"'Mother,' I called, 'I have it! We'll wrap the parrot up carefully in paper, and send it to Director Striegel. I will write a note, telling him how honoured I feel at being able to send him a trifling present, which I hope he will accept, as the bird is of rare species. He will be sure to be flattered by the little attention, and we shall be able to get rid of the bird with credit, for to give, you know, is better than to receive.'

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"With tearful eyes my wife took leave of the dear, sweet little parrot, which had managed to break a vase before we could capture it. I comforted her by saying that she would be able to see the bird again when she called on the frau director. Then our maid Bertha set out with it, and half-an-hour later came back with a very nice note: 'My dear sir,' it ran, 'the acceptance of your kind present, just received, gives me the greatest pleasure. For a long time it has been my great desire to possess a parrot. I had not bought one because I never found one pretty enough for me. I never saw such a beauty as the one you have so kindly sent me, for which I hereby thank you most heartily.'

"'So you see, mother,' I said, 'what is an owl to one is a nightingale to another.'

"Christmas night arrived. It is always such a peculiar time. The older a man gets the more uncertain he feels whether it is going to bring him happiness or misfortune. Mother and I had exchanged presents and sat hand in hand in front of the sparkling Christmas fire. Neither of us spoke; we were both busy with our thoughts. At such times one wonders if it will be the last time that one will sit so; if not, perhaps a year later one or the other will be resting quietly under the sod.

"Our reveries were interrupted by a sharp ring at the bell, and almost immediately the servant entered the room, carrying a very strange-looking parcel and a note.

"'Mr. Ibsen's compliments. He has sent you a Christmas present.'

"'I must confess I am curious to know what it can be,' I said to my wife, who was busy taking the wrappers off. Then I opened the note and read: 'Dear Benjamin, will you accept the accompanying trifling present? After a great deal of searching I finally unearthed the parrot, which I am sending you. The dealer assures me that it is an exceptionally fine bird. I know that you are very fond of parrots, and hope you will be pleased to have this one.'

"'Confound it all!' I roared in a rage, 'what the dickens do people mean by sending me parrots? What can I do with the bird? I'll tell you what. I'll send it over to the director just as it is in the cage. He'll be glad to have the pair. That's what I'll do.'

"So again I wrote a few words. The dealer from whom I had bought a parrot in the morning, had, by chance, received a second and similar bird, which he had at once offered me. It gave me great pleasure to ask him to accept the parrot which I was sending him.

"Bertha went again, and returned with the message that the director was so overjoyed with the present, that he was absolutely unable to find words in which to express his thanks. He would call on me the following morning to return thanks in person.

"Then we sat down to the table. I was so happy and so merry! The greatest happiness consists in making others happy, and that joy was mine. And as Bertha cleared the table she related again and again, to my great satisfaction, how overcome with joy the director had seemed.

"Another hour passed—it must have been close upon nine—when the door opened, and my friend Ibsen entered, with a cage in his hand.

"'Why, Ibsen, what makes you call so late?' I asked astonished.

"'Well,' said he, after he had greeted my wife, 'the fact is, I am sorry to disturb you, but the dealer from whom I bought the parrot this morning has just sent me a similar second one, and I am so glad to be able to give you a little pleasant surprise that I brought it myself.'

"Deeply moved, I gave him my hand. 'You are really very kind,' I said. 'How have I merited such attention?'

"'Oh, don't mention it,' he said. 'But let us put both parrots in the same cage. I am curious to see how they will behave.'

"'So am I,' I answered, and then, embarrassed, added: 'Do you know, I have had a curious experience with the first parrot you sent me.'

"'Why, how so?' asked Ibsen astonished.

"'Well, I had to make some present to our director, and I thought you wouldn't take it amiss, so I sent him the parrot.'

"Ibsen was astonished. 'What a contemptible thing to do!'

"'How contemptible?'

"'Why,' he replied, in turn embarrassed, 'I myself received the first parrot from the director, and I sent it to you because I thought you would like it.'

"'And the second?' I asked eagerly.

"'Why, I got that from the director, too. But what's amiss with you?'

"I sank down, quite overcome. The poor parrot—twice had I received it as a present, had twice given it away, and now for the third time it was there before me in all its glory. But there was one good thing about the whole affair. In being sent about it had caught cold, and in less than a week it was dead. I am sorry now, because I could have given it to you. I think I have one of its wings left, which would do to put into a hat."

H. GRUDER.

THREE BIG SURPRISES.

THERE are at the present moment three very great attractions which are drawing public attention to *Pearson's Weekly*.

The first of these is:

An offer of a situation on the staff of the paper at a salary of £200 a year, given to the lucky young man whom the editor considers is the most suitable of those who enter for a very simple examination. Full particulars will be found in the current number of *Pearson's Weekly*, and the last day for sending in is Monday, January 31st, so that there is little time to lose.

Surprise No. 2 is:

A magnificent new serial story written by Mr. Louis Tracy, and entitled "The Lost Provinces." It deals with a furious war between France and Germany, the Germans being led by the Emperor, William II., and the French by Jerome K. Vansittart, the American millionaire who posed as hero in Mr. Tracy's well-known story "An American Emperor." Each instalment is crammed with incident, and is written in a bright and crisp style.

Surprise No. 3 is:

An offer of £1,000, £100, and £25 every week in connection with a simple football competition. Even if you yourself know nothing about football, you stand a very good chance of winning one of these prizes by getting the advice of one who does know.

These are the three chief attractions at present in *P. W.* There are many more too numerous to mention, but you will find out all about them by getting a copy of the current issue.

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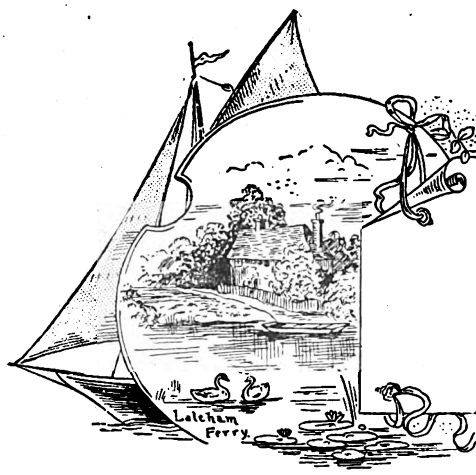

The Girl Who Knew too Much.

CURTIS KENT, a young man who had inherited a fortune, and had doubled it in business, was opening his letters one morning when he was surprised to find the following:

Ann Street Bank,
London, October 18th, 189—.

DEAR SIR,—This bank holds, under protest, a bill drawn by Wilbur S. Fletcher, July 17th, 189—, at three months, for £780, payable at the Ann Street Bank, and protested for non-payment October 17th. It was accepted by you and the proceeds placed to credit of Wilbur S. Fletcher by whom the amount has been drawn. Please give this matter your early attention. See inclosed formal notice.—Yours truly,

MORRIS HOLWORTH, Manager.

The inclosure was the usual notice of protest. Mr. Kent gave the matter his "early attention."

He required no special urging, but went at once to the Ann Street Bank, which was not very far from his office. Mr. Holworth did not make Mr. Kent wait. The bank official knew the merchant by reputation, though they had never met before.

"I received a notice from you this morning," said Mr. Kent, "in reference to a bill drawn by a man named Fletcher and purporting to be accepted by me."

The manager's brow was furrowed by lines of anxiety the instant that his ear caught the word "purporting."

"Is there anything wrong with it?" he asked.

"I never heard of Wilbur S. Fletcher," he said. "I never saw the bill before."

"Do you mean that your signature is a forgery?" exclaimed Holworth.

"Certainly. It is not even a good forgery. The resemblance to my signature is so slight that it would not deceive anybody."

"This is extraordinary," said Holworth. "I remember this transaction very distinctly, and I understood that you called here with reference to it."

"I never called here for any purpose before," said Kent promptly.

The manager opened a door which led into another office and called to Mr. Newcombe, the assistant manager of the bank.

"You remember that Fletcher note indorsed by Curtis Kent?" said Holworth. "Didn't you tell me that Mr. Kent called upon you about it?"

"Yes," said the under official, entering the room. "He came to see me, and explained why he was accepting the paper. Is anything the matter with it?"

"This is Mr. Kent, and——"

"What!" cried Newcombe. "This is not the man who called on me!"

Here was a fraud, open and palpable. That the present Mr. Kent was the real one could not be doubted, and if the other had been bogus, the bank had been robbed.

The first thing to do was to get to the accurate history of the case. This, as explained to Mr. Kent, was as follows:

A handsome young man, giving his name as Wilbur S. Fletcher, had called on Mr. Holworth at the bank in July. He said that he was going to buy a share in a business, at that time being conducted by John Spaulding, whose office was in a big building in Marsden Street. Mr. Spaulding was engaged in the manufacture and sale of a patented portable heating apparatus for offices.

Mr. Fletcher admitted that he had neither money nor credit, but he had a good friend who possessed both. That friend was Curtis Kent.

"He had agreed to accept a bill for me," said Fletcher, "in order that I may get the money to buy a share in that business. Indeed, he offered to lend me the money, but I preferred to do it in this way. I have made an arrangement with Mr. Spaulding that he will transfer the account of the business to your bank when I become his partner. This is the only inducement I can offer you to take the bill."

Mr. Holworth said he would consider the matter. In the first place, he had a representative of a commercial agency "look up" Mr. Kent. The report was all that could be desired.

Fletcher called again, and was asked how much of an account Mr. Spaulding would carry. He admitted that it would be small at first—about five hundred pounds to begin with—but he called attention to the fact that the balance of such a business would naturally be small in summer. In the winter it should run up to four or five times that amount.

On the same day the bogus Mr. Kent called, and he had such a satisfactory story to tell that the bank decided to take the bill.

Mr. Fletcher drew it in Holworth's presence, and the manager gave it to the messenger, who took it to Mr. Kent's office, where it was accepted.

When the story had reached this point Mr. Kent was naturally deeply interested. He could not see how the note could have been sent to his office without betraying the whole game.

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"I'd like to see the messenger that you sent over there," he said.

The messenger was summoned. He was a man over fifty years old, but as erect and active as a youth. There was something of the soldier in his bearing; it clung to him despite the thirty years that had passed since he had served his country in the field.

A more honest face than John O'Neil's would have been hard to find. Upon being questioned, he remembered perfectly the affair of the note. But the surprising thing was that he recognised Mr. Kent.

"I took the bill to the office of Kent and Co., as directed," he said. "This gentleman was at his desk. I could see him from where I stood, outside a little window, where a boy sat to take visitors' names.

"'Are you from the Ann Street Bank?' says he.

"'I am,' says I.

"'Then give me the bill, and I'll take it to Mr. Kent,' says he.

"I wouldn't have done it, if I had not been where I could see the gentleman himself, but as it was, I did. The boy took the note, and gave it to a young woman, who took it to Mr. Kent, and he endorsed it."

"How did you know he was Mr. Kent?" asked Holworth. "Did you depend on what you were told?"

"No, sir; I had seen the gentleman before."

"This seems to be an elaborate conspiracy," said Holworth to Kent. "We have found five people in it already. There are Fletcher and Spaulding, and the man who represented himself to be you. Then the boy and the woman in your office must have been in it; so that makes five."

"Then you saw Spaulding?"

"Certainly. He transferred his account as agreed."

"What does it amount to now?" asked Kent.

The account was looked up, with the result that Mr. Spaulding was found to have a balance of five pounds odd.

"Of course he has skipped before this," said the manager. "His account ran down to a hundred pounds very soon after we took it, and about a week ago he drew it down to where it is now."

"It would be worth while to send a man down to the place where his office was," said the manager. "Come to think of it, I can look in there. It's close to the Central Trust Company's offices, where I must be at twelve o'clock."

"I've got curiosity enough to go with you," said Kent, "if you're going now. It strikes me that this is a very neat game, and I'd like a little more light on it."

It was agreed that the bank should report the case to the police at once. Kent was asked whether the boy and the young woman mentioned by O'Neil were still in his employ. When the messenger had described them, Kent said that both had left him. As nearly as he could remember, they gave up their position about the time of the bill transaction. He had no idea where they could be found. Holworth and Kent went to the address of John Spaulding. They had little expectation of finding any clue to his whereabouts, and they were therefore greatly surprised to find that he occupied a fine suite of rooms, and was surrounded by every evidence of prosperity.

But the biggest surprise came when they were shown into the presence of Mr. Spaulding. He did not resemble the man who had given that name at the Ann Street Bank; he had never had an account there; he had sold no interest in his business; and he had never heard of Wilbur Fletcher.

The swindlers had merely used Spaulding's name, trusting to luck that he would not hear of it in time to interfere with their plans.

"How do we know that your messenger ever went to my office? He may have committed the forgery himself," said Kent suspiciously.

"I'm not given to over-confidence in others," rejoined Holworth, "but I'll require considerable evidence before I believe in O'Neil's guilt. He has been with us for years, and his record is A1."

Kent was thinking about the young woman who had figured so disagreeably in O'Neil's story. He remembered her as a really beautiful girl, in whom he had taken a deep interest. He had been very sorry when she announced that she must leave his employ and added that she was about to be married.

He reflected that she was likely to get into trouble over the affair, and the longer he thought of it the less he liked the idea. The result was that he called upon Harrison Keith, the detective, that evening, and asked him to look up the case.

"I'm sure the girl is honest," he said, "and I want you to see that she escapes annoyance. If the bank people get after her, you block them."

At the outset, there seemed little need for Keith to stand between the regular police and Miss Bertha Warren—the name by which Mr. Kent had known the young woman in question. The police failed to find her. Even Keith was baffled for a time.

The boy mentioned by O'Neil was easily found, his name was Ben Chase. His story agreed with O'Neil's as far as possible.

Chase said that on the morning of July 17th, Miss Warren told him that a man from the Ann Street Bank might call with a note. If so, Chase was to give it to her, and she was to carry it to Mr. Kent. The boy had done just as she had told him to do, and that was all he knew about it.

In tracing Fletcher, Keith made better progress than in pursuing the girl. He soon struck a clue.

Keith did not feel much interest in the affair at first, but as the case developed it began to interest him, and one of its most entertaining features was the clue to the identity of Fletcher which has been already referred to.

The very accurate description furnished by Holworth suggested to Keith's memory a mean scamp—with names enough to fill a directory—who had made his living in the attractive field known as boarding-house sneak thieving.

He was one of those fellows who call to look at rooms and clear off the hat-rack while the servant is calling her mistress. Sometimes such a thief will examine the rooms, and put small objects into his pocket while he is doing so, or he will even engage a room, in order to prey for a day or two upon other lodgers.

From such an occupation to "doing" a bank, is a step so long that scarcely anybody ever takes it. Keith was greatly interested to know what had developed Fletcher's genius so rapidly.

He had previously been distinguished only for his good looks. His picture was in the Rogues' Gallery, and it was a long way the handsomest in the collection.

Keith found that Fletcher was in Liverpool, and soon tracked him to the house where he was living.

He found that the local man who had been watching the house for him had reason to suspect that he was visited in this house by a young woman. He described her as being very handsome, always dressed in black.

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He soon succeeded in discovering the girl and getting a look at her; and he had no doubt that she was the missing Bertha Warren.

The detective telegraphed the facts to Kent in London, and he replied that he would start for Liverpool at once. Evidently he was deeply interested in his pretty ex-employée.

Pending Kent's arrival, Keith did nothing but keep Fletcher and Miss Warren under surveillance. Both remained very quiet, though once, for a few hours, Miss Warren got away from an expert "shadow," who had been lent to Keith for a time by the Liverpool Chief of Police.

There was considerable doubt whether she had done it intentionally or accidentally. The shadow inclined to the latter view. He reported that the girl seemed to be unconscious of his presence, and that her conduct, as a whole, was not that of a criminal.

When Kent arrived, he insisted upon calling upon the girl at once. She was known in her lodging as Mrs. Quesada.

Keith let Kent do as he wished. It was the best thing to do, so far as the girl's interests were concerned, and it must not be forgotten that Keith had primarily been retained to act in her behalf.

Bertha Warren had never looked more beautiful than on the day when Kent was ushered into the apartment where she awaited him. The man's heart beat tumultuously as he looked at her.

"How does it happen that you are here?" she cried. "Is it possible that you got my letter so soon?"

"I have received no letter from you," he said.

"Then why are you here?"

He told her frankly. She shed many tears as she listened to his words.

"Had you received my letter," she said, at last, "you would now know the secret of this shameful affair. I confessed it all in writing. Certainly I should have no hesitancy in telling you the truth as we stand face to face, though it is a dreadful thing to tell."

"I am a criminal, Mr. Kent, and I ask no mercy—at least, not for myself. For my mother——"

Her voice broke. She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

The sounds of her sobs penetrated to the adjoining room. The door between the two apartments opened, and a stately woman, grey-haired, but still beautiful, entered and bowed to Kent.

"I am her mother," she said, in a voice that would have melted a heart of stone.

She walked to the girl's side and stroked Bertha's pretty brown hair lovingly.

"She has been led into evil, poor child," continued Mrs. Warren. "Now she will make amends so far as she is able by telling the whole truth. Speak, Bertha."

Bertha, after a great struggle, raised her head.

"It was love," she said, "and I was bitterly deceived. But, thank Heaven! I learnt the truth in time to save myself from the disgrace of being his wife."

"Whose wife?" cried Kent. "Fletcher's?"

"That was the name he used in the wicked transaction I was made to assist in bringing to success," said the girl. "I had met him at the house of an acquaintance in London. I loved him the instant that my eyes rested on him. He is so handsome."

Kent winced.

"I did not then read his heart," Bertha continued. "He is deep. His villainy is not upon the surface. He seemed to be equally attracted by me. We met every day. Within a week he had told me of his love, and I replied not unkindly. He asked me to marry him, but at the same time told me that we must wait. He was poor. Thus we came to talk of his affairs. He said that bad luck had pursued him, and had reduced him to the last possibility of desperation. He was then a clerk upon starvation wages—half of what you were good enough to pay so worthless a worker as I am.

"He had been obliged to pawn most of the fine clothes which he had bought in more prosperous times, to meet the necessities of life. But he was full of hope. He said that a great business opportunity had presented itself. If he could find some one who would lend him a few hundred pounds he could buy a share of a splendid business that would make him rich, and enable us to be united very soon.

"There were wealthy friends, he said, to whom he would apply for the loan of the money he needed. In the succeeding days he grew more and more gloomy. All his friends were turning their backs upon him.

"What he desired was to secure the acceptance of a bill by some rich man. He kept repeating to me that it did not involve the loan of a penny from the acceptor. A bank would lend the money, and he could easily pay the bill when it came due by making another bill for another bank, and pledging his stock in the business as security. It would be worth, he said, far more than he should have to pay for it.

"He spoke of you and said that it would be easy enough to discount a bill with your acceptance. It would cost you nothing. Then, as if in gloomy jest, he suggested the plan by which your credit could be used without your knowing it.

"Jest became earnest. I—oh, how wicked I am—I agreed to do the deed. You must know by this time how it is done. I knew—for he told me—that on a certain day the messenger with the bill would be sent from the bank. I told Ben, the boy who sat by the window, to hand the bill to me.

"Then, when it came, I substituted a messenger boy's ticket for it. You signed that, and at the same moment I put your name on the bill, writing on top of your desk tactically before your very eyes. How could I have done such a thing?"

"You were wholly under that man's evil influence, my dear," said the mother gently. "The sin will be forgiven you."

"It will by me," said Kent promptly. "I will never say anything about it."

"But the bank?" said Mrs. Warren. "It has been robbed, and will not forgive. No, my daughter must suffer the penalty, but——"

She could not go on. Her voice failed her. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she fell upon her knees and begged Kent to save her daughter.

The tears were trickling down Kent's cheeks. He looked at the girl and he looked at her grey-haired mother, and the longer he gazed the smaller became the sum of £780 in comparison with the demands for mercy.

"Don't cry, either of you," he said. "I understand"—he turned to Bertha—"that you escaped unscathed from that villain's clutches?"

The girl looked him full in the face.

"I learnt his guilt before my hand was given to him," she said. "I need say no more to you, who know me."

"It's all right," cried Kent. "Don't you worry a bit. I'll get you out of this scrape all right."

"Impossible!" sobbed Bertha. "I am a forger."

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"Who says you are?" rejoined Kent. "I'd like to see anybody prove it."

"I have confessed."

"You have confessed to me only. As to the signature, it's genuine. There's no forgery about it. A man can authorise anybody to sign his name for him. Very well, you have my authority to do that, and I am going back to London to pay it!"

When the full significance of this statement was made clear to Mrs. Warren, she swooned for joy. Bertha and Kent had hard work in restoring her to consciousness.

Then she and her daughter joined in protesting that Kent's generosity was too great. But his purpose was not to be shaken.

The girl hid her face in her hands, and called herself unworthy.

"We'll see about that later," said Kent. "The only trouble now will be that my action in accepting the signature will probably clear that rascal Fletcher. I suppose he might be prosecuted for getting money under false pretences, even if the signature was genuine, but that would make trouble and bring your name into the proceedings.

"So perhaps the best way is to let him go. He'll wind up in jail anyway; we needn't be in any great hurry to send him."

So the matter was arranged, Bertha was to take her mother to the home of some relatives in a village near Liverpool. Then the girl was to return to London, and re-enter Kent's employ. The police were to be withdrawn from the case after as much money as possible had been scared out of Fletcher.

Bertha, on learning the truth, had tried to frighten Fletcher into meeting the bill, and had followed him to Liverpool for that purpose, finally writing to Kent.

When Kent had heard all this from her lips, he reluctantly left her, and joined Harrison Keith at the place agreed upon. The detective was directed to remove the watch from Miss Warren, but to keep Fletcher in sight for a few days.

Keith approved of Kent's plan of calling upon the criminal, and offered to arrange the best time for it. On the evening of the day following that on which Bertha had made her confession, Keith notified Kent that the time was ripe for seeing Fletcher. They accordingly went to the criminal's home.

Keith, in disguise, had engaged the room next Fletcher's, and had arranged a means of hearing what was said in the crook's retreat.

"He's been pretty quiet," said Keith, when Kent joined him in the room he had engaged. "He's had few visitors, and he hasn't been out of the house once. There's somebody in there with him now, so you'll have to wait. Meanwhile, you can overhear their conversation."

So saying, Keith opened the door of a closet. Instantly the sound of voices in Fletcher's room became plainly audible.

"You miserable whelp!" a hard-voiced woman was saying, "what would become of you if I didn't look out for you? I picked you up a hall thief, and I've made something worth while out of you. The least you can do in return is to obey my orders. Why did you leave this house after I expressly ordered you not to do it?"

"See here, Bertha," replied Fletcher, in a cringing tone. "you're stepping on me a little too hard, ain't you? What have I got out of this, anyhow? You swiped all the swag we got out of the bill deal. I haven't seen a ha'penny of it except my expenses. And now you put me in this cheap hole and let me half starve."

"Shut up!" cried Bertha Warren, the late tearful penitent. "I give you all that you deserve. If you behave yourself, you'll be in clover when I've married that very easy mark, Kent."

"Married him! Why, you're married to me!"

"Yes, and to a better man than either of you besides. But that doesn't count. Another won't hurt me. He won't be a long job; he's too soft. I'll have his dough in about a year at the outside."

"What am I to do meanwhile?"

"Lie low, and get along on what I can spare," she said, with a laugh. "Now mind what I tell you. I've played this game well, so far. Suppose I'd taken your advice; where would we have been? No, sir; I'm the only thief that ever got the best of Harrison Keith, and did it in the only possible way—by throwing up both hands the instant I learnt that he was on the case. Otherwise, he'd have had us both in the jug. My letter to that fool Kent was a masterpiece. I'm only sorry he missed getting it; but Keith was a little too quick for me. And as for my mother——"

Bertha laughed softly, but with evident great enjoyment.

Kent thrust both hands into his hair, and staggered out of the apartment.

"Oh, Keith, Keith!" he cried; "for the love of Heaven, don't let this get out on me! Oh—h—h!"

It was a combined groan and shudder.

"I might have married her!" he continued. "Yes, I might, by the eternal hills! And she has how many husbands already? Was it a dozen? And that mother of hers! She——"

"Is no relation whatever," said Keith. "She is Celia Delafield, a supposed actress, engaged for the occasion. In reality she is about twenty-nine years old. The grey hair was a wig. I'll admit she played well—better, I'll be bound, than she ever could on the boards.

"Yes, you were neatly fooled, Mr. Kent, but it will come out all right. We'll put both those creatures behind the bars. And there's a third, too—a supposed actor named Gallatin, who, I strongly suspect, personated both you and Spaulding in this little comedy. I think he is also that husband better than either you or Fletcher, to whom the young lady referred."

"Don't! don't!" groaned Kent. "I—I'm going back to London. I suppose you'll act for the regular department in the remainder of the case. Send your bill to date to me, and if it's under five thousand, I'll pay it at once. I'd have married her!"

He shivered as if he had been stabbed with an icicle. Then, with a wave of his hand to Keith, he hurried from the room, from the house, and from the city.

J. H. P.

A BURGLARY CLAIM PAID.

ANOTHER reader of *Pearson's Weekly*, who was wise enough to comply with the conditions made in the insurance coupon in that paper, has just been paid a sum of money to cover the loss he sustained through his house being entered by thieves.

This is the 105th payment of the kind made by *P.W.*

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By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Madame Sybil.

"Well, General, how is your patient? Any quieter than he was?"

"I thing he is so quiet, Don Francisco, that he will remain so for a very long time. Most of us are a long time dead, eh? Would you like to come and see him? It would be more satisfactory to you, and, you know, in a place like this, the sooner you have the funeral the better. Come, I will show you."

"Very well," said Lorrain. "Perhaps it would be as well. Just wait till I've got a fresh cigar going. I don't suppose the air of those apartments of yours downstairs would strike one as particularly fresh after the breezes of the Carribean Sea. Did he take it quietly?" he went on as the General led the way towards the lower regions of the citadel.

"Quietly? Yes, and like a gentleman until just towards the end," he said, pointing to the sundry strips of plaster with which his face was adorned. "And then just at the last, even after he had drunk the sedative, he so far forgot his manners as to fling his glass in my face, and he cut me grievously, as you see. *Carrajo!* I could have killed him for it, but then, of course, there was no need."

"N—o, of course, there wouldn't be," laughed Lorrain, "but still, I dare say you got just as much satisfaction out of watching him die, and it would be less trouble, too, wouldn't it? Phew, what a beastly hole! It isn't fit to put a dog into!"

"Unless the dog walked on two legs and was an enemy, señor. That would be another matter, wouldn't it?" replied the General, with a soft, fat sort of laugh, as the sentry whom he had summoned to attend them unlocked the door of the cell and threw it open. "See, there he is. Go and see for yourself. I think you will find him quiet enough."

So far the conversation had, of course, been carried on in Spanish, but as Lorrain went to the side of the stone bench on which lay the lifeless body of the man who a few hours ago had been her ladyship's husband, he forgot his habitual caution for an instant and muttered as he lifted one of the half-closed eyelids:

"Yes, he is dead enough, but I wonder if he said anything before he died."

Don Gregorio's quick ears caught the words, and as Lorrain's back was turned to him, he indulged in a fleeting smile, but there was not a sign of intelligence upon his face when Lorrain looked round a moment after and said in Spanish:

"He seems dead enough for all practical purposes. That must be wonderful stuff of yours. Could you give me some of it?"

"It might be possible!" replied Don Gregorio, with a secondary meaning which Lorrain was a long way from suspecting. "It is, as you say, useful. If you have that, you ask your best enemy in a friendly sort of way to have a cocktail with you. He says 'yes.' You mix the cocktail, and, if you don't make a mistake in the glasses, it is done. Of course, if you do, well, there, no one but a fool would do that. So, Don Francisco, are you satisfied that your requests have been complied with?"

"Yes, General, I think that will do," replied Lorrain, who meanwhile had been carefully seeking for any signs of vitality in the heart or pulse which had ceased their beating for ever. "The funeral can take place as soon as you like, and the quicker and quieter it is the better."

"It shall take place at once, Don Francisco, and then there can be no mistake," said the General, turning to the sentry. "José, put down your keys and take the chain off the Señor Inglese's body. Meanwhile, Don Francisco, if you will help me with your strength, I will show you that those old Spaniards who built this place provided for all emergencies."

As he said this he kicked away some rotten matting which half covered the floor of the cell, and under it Lorrain saw a big, oblong slab of stone with an iron ring-bolt in one end. Don Gregorio took the rifle which the sentry had laid aside, put it through the ring, and asked Lorrain to stand on the other side and take hold of the barrel end.

"Now lift!" he said, taking the butt in his own hand.

Lorrain obeyed, and after a tug or two the stone came up, revolving on a middle axis, which creaked as if the trap had not been used very recently. Underneath there was a black hole, out of which came an unpleasant sound of soughing, sluggish waters.

"Handy, but filthily disagreeable," said Lorrain, "even for the disposal of one's enemies. Still, I suppose it is as good a grave for a dead man as any other."

"Certainly," said Don Gregorio, "since the dead are not fastidious. But in the old times they used to use it for living enemies as well. You see how far we have progressed in civilisation since then, señor! Now, José, bring the Señor Inglese here and let us see the last of him."

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The sentry, who had meanwhile knocked out the bolt which held the iron band round the waist of Sir Langton's body, took hold of the ankles and dragged it off the stone bench. Lorrain's finer sensibilities received a shock as the lifeless head struck the stone floor with a most disagreeable sound. The negro dragged the body to the edge of the hole, and stooped down to throw it in. As he did so Don Gregorio shifted his right hand from the rifle stock to his hip pocket, pulled out a revolver, and sent a bullet through the sentry's brain. His body lurched forward and disappeared down the hole. Lorrain heard the two quickly succeeding splashes in the water below, and then Don Gregorio, lowering his end of the rifle, said:

"Thank you, señor, that will do. We can put the stone down now. It is as well not to have too many independent witnesses of a little transaction of this sort. You and I are now the only people alive who know what happened to the unfortunate Señor Inglese who had the misfortune to become unnecessary to my best of friends. Now, if you please, we will go to the palace and drink a bottle to the repose of the Señor Inglese's soul. I wish also to give you the pleasure of knowing my wife. I sent her to my hacienda in the country when the trouble began, and she has returned to-day."

"Your what, General?" said Lorrain, with a laugh whose mirthlessness was possibly the result of what he had just seen. "Your wife! Without offence may I ask which? Have I seen her before?"

"No, I think you have not," said Don Gregorio without any sign of resentment at the very obvious insinuation.

He took up the lamp and lighted Lorrain out of the cell, carrying the sentry's rifle in the other hand. The door clanged to behind them. They went along the passage and up the filthy, half-rotten stairs which led to the ground floor, and when they reached it Don Gregorio leant the rifle against the wall and whispered:

"To-morrow I shall send for José, and hear that he has deserted. It is as well that there is no one about. It will make the matter easier, though, of course, he was only a nigger."

"And you're only the sort of unspeakable scoundrel that it takes a drop of black and a few more drops of white blood to make," thought Lorrain, as he followed him out of the citadel and across the plaza to the flat-roofed building of stuccoed mud, which was called the palace. A couple of sentries presented arms as they went in through the gates which led to the central court round which the palace was built. Don Gregorio led the way in a half deferential fashion to a garishly furnished drawing-room on the first floor, and said, motioning Lorrain to a sofa upholstered in flaring crimson velvet:

"Do me the honour to sit, Don Francisco. The señora, of whom I spoke down yonder, is, as I may say, my last wife, and, I may say too, that she is the most beautiful of them all. I have not told you of her on our way here, because I prefer that when you see her your eyes shall speak for me. I will only tell you now that she is an Inglesa, and I hope that when you see her your heart will still remain true to the señora of the late unfortunate, who was unhappy enough to marry her before you saw her. With your permission I will go and bring her."

"Pray do so, my dear General," said Lorrain, thankful for the chance of getting for even a few minutes out of his sight. "Pray do so. I can assure you that, after what you have said, I am all expectation to see la Señora Presidenta, and if you could send up some wine meanwhile I should be glad of it, for I haven't got the taste of that atmosphere down yonder out of my mouth yet."

"Assuredly," said Don Gregorio. "The wine shall come first and then the señora, but I know which you will find brightest and most sparkling."

As he left the room Don Francisco thrust his hands deep down into his trousers pockets and leant back on the sofa, staring up at the gaudily painted ceiling.

"Now," he said to himself in a low, musing half whisper, "I wonder what that greedy little scoundrel knows about this business. It didn't strike me that the little blackguard could speak English when I handed Pendril over to him. But, still, I don't suppose they would have any sort of conversation. Anyhow, even if Pendril had been able to do it the Magnet would be the last thing that he would talk about, surely. If Gregorio had suspected anything he might have tried torture, but he didn't, and I didn't see any marks on Pendril's body, so I suppose that's all right. Still, it was the sort of mistake that I mustn't make again."

He had got so far when a nigger lackey in what had once been a gorgeous livery brought in a big silver salver with glasses. He was followed by another with a couple of bottles of champagne in ice-buckets.

"You can put them down," he said to the first one in Spanish. "His Excellency will be back soon, and then we'll have them opened."

"By-the-way," he went on to himself in English, "I wonder what sort of a person the Señora is? An Englishwoman, too! What a fate! I wonder where he found her."

At this moment the door at the other end of the drawing-room opened.

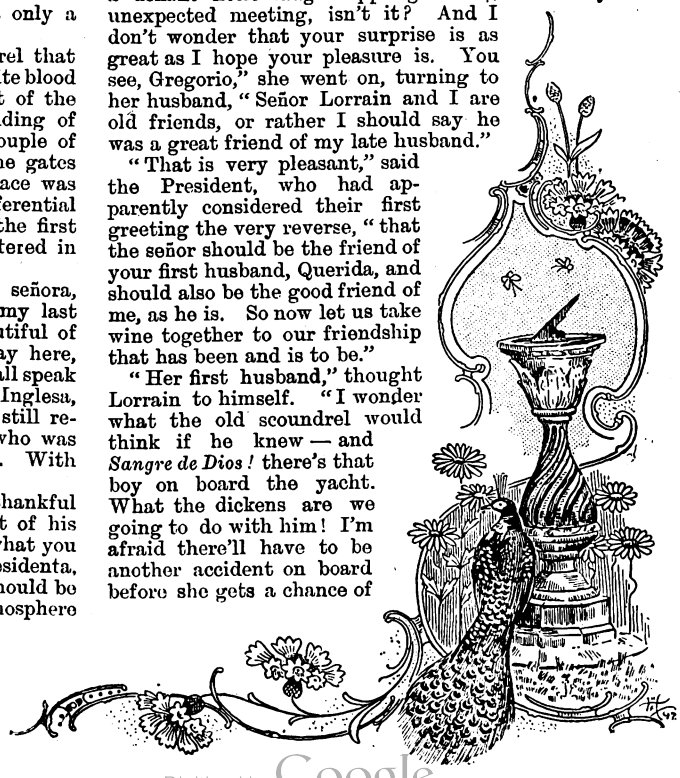
"Good-evening, Señor Lorrain. Welcome to the palace to which your most opportune arrival has restored us. I had no idea that our old friendship would be re-commenced under such pleasant circumstances."

"Good Heavens, Sybil! You!" Lorrain almost shouted, as he sprang to his feet and stood staring, utterly off his guard for the moment, at the queenly and splendidly-dressed figure that was advancing with hands outstretched down the room towards him.

"Yes, it is I!" she said, looking him straight in the eyes, and speaking in a voice that had just the suspicion of a defiant little laugh rippling through it. "Quite an unexpected meeting, isn't it? And I don't wonder that your surprise is as great as I hope your pleasure is. You see, Gregorio," she went on, turning to her husband, "Señor Lorrain and I are old friends, or rather I should say he was a great friend of my late husband."

"That is very pleasant," said the President, who had apparently considered their first greeting the very reverse, "that the señor should be the friend of your first husband, Querida, and should also be the good friend of me, as he is. So now let us take wine together to our friendship that has been and is to be."

"Her first husband," thought Lorrain to himself. "I wonder what the old scoundrel would think if he knew — and *Sangre de Dios!* there's that boy on board the yacht. What the dickens are we going to do with him! I'm afraid there'll have to be another accident on board before she gets a chance of



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seeing him. What in the name of all that is infernal and inconvenient brought the woman here just at this moment! Well, *Señor y señora,*" he went on aloud, taking a glass of champagne from the President, "it is a pleasant meeting that brings old friends together. I drink to your healths, and to the honour and happiness of your union."

There was an almost imperceptible stress on the "honour" which brought the blood for the moment to Sybil Pendril's cheeks, but it passed unnoticed by Don Gregorio, and Lorrain's toast was drunk with the most friendly cordiality. In the conversation which followed Lorrain easily perceived a carefully veiled, but nevertheless eager desire on the part of both of them to get a clearer idea of his plans and purposes than he had the slightest intention of giving them, and when, after refusing a most pressing invitation to spend the night at the palace, he rose to take his leave, all they had got from him was the information which he had vouchsafed early in the conversation, that he intended the next day, or the day after, to undertake a sort of half picnic, half exploring trip up to the head waters of the Ozama, a sort of prospecting party in fact, which would make, at any rate, an attempt to locate the treasure-chest of Don Christoval, and when he got back on board the *Minnehaha*, at about eleven, he found her ladyship walking up and down the poop with short, unequal strides that betokened anything but a peaceful frame of mind.

"Well," she said, stopping short as he came to meet her; "is it—is he—is my husband safe and well?"

"Safe? Yes, Jessica *mia*," he replied, taking her hands and then, unresisted, slipping one arm round her waist and stooping down and kissing her. "The fact is, Querida," he went on in the soft, caressing tone that had now become so familiar to her, "he is so safe that you may henceforth dismiss him completely from a heart that he was never worthy to occupy. There is no need to go into details. Let it suffice that you are free, free to give your sweet self to one who loves you with a love that he, poor creature, never dreamt of. You can say that your life begins from now. So far you have only existed. Now you shall live. Come, let us go below. I have something surprising and of the greatest importance to tell you."

Her ladyship shivered in his arms, but she said nothing. Whatever had been done was done, and she recognised that however hideous the crime might be, it was not only inevitable, but, moreover, that she, by deliberately anticipating it, had taken to herself a very distinct share of the guilt.

When they reached the state-room he took her by the hands again and said:

"Jessica, who do you think Don Gregorio introduced me to at the palace to-night as—well, his wife he called her?"

"I have no idea. Who was it?"

"None other than Sybil Viney that was," he said. "Sybil Pendril that was later still, and mother of the present Sir Arthur Pendril, who, in the ordinary course of things, would now succeed to the baronetcy and the estates, provided always that no accidents happen to him before his mother or any other officious friend of the family is able to put forward his claims and prove them."

"And when is the accident to happen, Francisco?" she said, looking up at him with the glint of an evil light in her pretty eyes and a hard ring in her voice that was not there the last time she spoke.

"I am glad to see that your ladyship's spirit rises to the occasion," he said. "You will be a fitting life companion for one who has never yet allowed an obstacle to bar the pathway of his life purposes, and I can assure you that the accident will be arranged for with the least possible delay."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Trip to Sea.

When her ladyship awoke the next morning she was surprised to find by the vibration that the yacht's propellers were working at very considerable velocity, and that the yacht herself was evidently going very fast through the water. She got up and dressed as quickly as possible and went up on deck to learn the reason of this unexpected departure from their original plans. She looked about her and saw to her astonishment that the *Minnehaha* was almost out of sight of land, and that the high coast of Hayti only looked like a low brown line on the horizon. The yacht's bow, however, was pointed towards it, and a glance at the water swirling past her sides in long, smooth green swathes and tumbling away behind her in a wide wake of foam, told her that, wherever the *Minnehaha* had been, and whatever her errand, she was making the best of her speed back to the place she had come from.

Lorrain was on the bridge with Captain Peters, apparently in close conversation with him, but when he looked up and saw her on deck, he came down to meet her, and as they shook hands he said:

"Good-morning, your ladyship. Change of air seems to have tempted you out pretty early."

"Change of air!" she echoed. "Yes, it is indeed a change. Have we been all night at sea, and may I ask the reason for the change? You didn't tell me anything about it last night."

"No," he said with one of those smiles of his which she had got accustomed to find at once so pleasant and unpleasant. "And yet in a way I did. The fact is there were one or two reasons. In the first place, you knew the harbour of Santo Domingo is very unhealthy, and as we have to take a trip into the interior shortly, I thought a change of air wouldn't be at all a bad thing. Secondly, I regret to tell you that late last night, or, rather, early this morning, we had a death on board."

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"What—not——"

"Y—e—s," he said quite seriously, "I fear your suspicions are correct. The sometime heir of Pendril Abbey died at two o'clock this morning. We will say of malaria and dysentry, which, unfortunately, is not by any means an uncommon combination in these islands, and especially in the old Spanish towns. As it was necessary for sanitary and other reasons to dispose of the remains, as the undertakers say, as speedily as possible, I thought it would be best to run fifty or sixty miles out to sea and get the matter finished before anyone had any time to make inconvenient inquiries. The funeral took place about ten minutes before your ladyship came on deck. By the way, I can call you 'your ladyship' now without the slightest reservation.

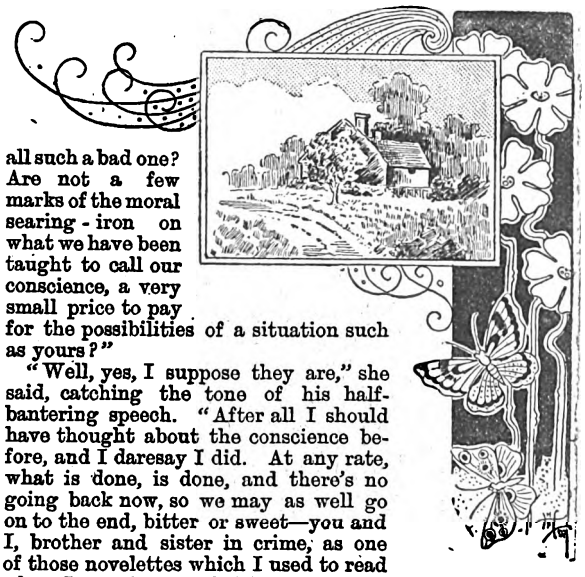
"Well, yes, I can quite understand your looking at me in that half reproachful sort of way," he went on as Jessie stopped suddenly in their walk, and looked up at him with something in her eyes, half fear and half horror. "And, I daresay, I deserve it; but then, you see, I thought you would like to be relieved of the unpleasant necessity of thinking and acting in these delicate matters, and of course I couldn't ignore the fact that it would be extremely awkward for you and all of us if Sybil Pendril had come on board the yacht this morning and found her son alive and well.

"She's a bad woman, a very bad woman, in fact; but she is, or rather was, this boy's mother, and very bad women are sometimes very good mothers. Then, again, the unexpected appearance of Mrs. Arthur Pendril, as we may call her, brought a very serious complication into our affairs. You know it can't be very long before Mr. Leigh Tristam and his bride get out here, and if they should by any chance get into communication with Madame Sybil and tell her that the old baronet is dead—well, she would very soon arrive at the very logical conclusion that her son is the only lawful heir to the baronetcy, and that she was his natural guardian till he came of age. That, of course, would mean that she could take the boy to England, and, after proving his identity and her own, take charge of the Abbey and the Pendril estates and revenue for a period of some thirteen or fourteen years. And in that case, you see, from your ladyship's point of view, there would be the very dickens to pay."

"Don't talk like that, Francisco, please," she said in a tone that was almost pleading; "don't. Who knows but what the dickens—I mean the account for all this—may have to be paid some day? I do not—of course, I cannot—blame you for what you have done, because I know you have done it mostly for my sake and with my knowledge, and yet do you know you have made me feel at times even viler and more wicked than Sybil Viney herself, for somehow even I can't bring myself to give her the name that was my mother's.

"I am a murderess by another's hand, as she is; but there are two lives to my charge, and only one to hers, and for the rest," she said, with a pitiful little droop of the head, "I suppose we are about equals. I wish to Heaven I had never seen this horrible thing that I once said I would give my soul for; and, fancy, if it hadn't been for that chance flirtation with my master's son in the library that night I might still have been a servant girl, a lady's-maid with unsatisfied ambitions, but for all that a clear conscience, and here I am only a month or two later——"

"Yes, here you are," he said, breaking in on a soliloquy that it was becoming unpleasant for him to hear. "Here you are, a woman, young, talented, beautiful and ambitious, with the means of procuring that which will gratify every ambition that you can have, and with a man at your side, who, whatever his personal faults, and, conventionally speaking, his sins—his crimes if you like—is yet devoted heart and soul to you, and who is not without those qualities which may be of some service to you in attaining those ambitions. Come now, your ladyship, is the change after



all such a bad one? Are not a few marks of the moral searing-iron on what we have been taught to call our conscience, a very small price to pay for the possibilities of a situation such as yours?"

"Well, yes, I suppose they are," she said, catching the tone of his half-bantering speech. "After all I should have thought about the conscience before, and I daresay I did. At any rate, what is done, is done, and there's no going back now, so we may as well go on to the end, bitter or sweet—you and I, brother and sister in crime, as one of those novelettes which I used to read when I was Gwynneth Harley's lady's maid, would have called us."

"Brother and sister," he echoed, pressing the hand that she had put through his arm a little closer to his side. "For the present, yes, if your ladyship insists upon it, but, I give you fair warning, that it will not be long before I find such a relationship quite intolerable."

"Possibly," she said, looking up at him with the light of a swiftly changing mood shining in her eyes and lighting up her face with a very different expression to that which had darkened it a few moments before. "Possibly, but sufficient unto the day is the added wickedness thereof. Meanwhile, has it not struck you that all this while we have only been making a toy of the Gold Magnet, that we have not even begun yet to use it seriously? When are we going to look for Don Christoval's treasure-chest?"

"I hope that all my arrangements will be completed to-day, and that we shall be able to start by day-break to-morrow," he said, not altogether pleased by the sudden turn she had given the conversation. "We shall be back in Santo Domingo in a couple of hours, if the captain of the *Magicienne* doesn't take it into his head to stop us and make further inquiries into our business here, or if the Haytian government doesn't send round the rest of its fleet to see about the destruction of the *Dessalines*, which I daresay they've heard of, somehow, by this time. If they do, and the *Magicienne* doesn't interfere, there'll be a fight, and after that there won't be any Haytian navy to speak of."

"I hope not," she said. "I don't want to see any more fighting like that. By the way, what will happen now when Tristam and his wife get out here and find what has occurred?"

"Well, if they don't take sensible advice and keep out of the *Minnehaha's* way we may find it necessary to do them some very material damage. What I should prefer myself would be to catch them on an unfrequented part of the high seas, take Tristam and his wife and your late mistress prisoner, sink the yacht, and then retire to some quiet and unfrequented little island, say that Cay in which the Spanish treasure-ship is supposed to be buried, and make them individually and collectively pay the debt that Tristam owes me in such a fashion as circumstances might suggest. That would be much preferable to sending them hurriedly to the bottom, as we had to do with the crew of the *Dessalines*."

She pulled her arm out of his and stopped and faced him,

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and said with a smile on her lips and a little quaver in her voice:

"Francisco, which are you—a man or a devil, or both?"

"To the world at large, perhaps both," he laughed. "To those I love, a man, perhaps not quite as good as the average. To those I hate or those who may happen to get into my way—whatever your ladyship pleases to call me. Names, after all, don't matter very much."

"No, I daresay a good many highly respectable people at home would gladly be quite as wicked as we are if it wasn't for the policemen, and, talking about wickedness, I suppose we may expect a visit sometime to-day from the President and Madame Sybil. It will be rather awkward if Don Gregorio has happened to tell her about the boy being on board."

"I don't think there is very much chance of that—I mean of his having told her. I don't remember saying anything to him about him, and he only saw him for a minute or two on board if he saw him at all, and in any case I don't think he would know enough to connect him with the lady he now honours with the title of 'wife.' But even if he has done, what then? We have simply to say that the boy fell overboard by accident. Captain Peters yonder will tell her that he saw him do it, and both the officers will be prepared to swear that they lowered the boat, and that he sank before they could reach him. You know people who arrange accidents of this sort mustn't forget to arrange circumstances to fit them."

"I see," she said, looking up at him with a smile. "Still it was just as well that I mentioned it, because now I shall be able to do my share, if necessary, in arranging what the truth has got to be."

Within a few miles of the land the *Minnehaha* slowed down and ran into the harbour at an ordinary speed so as to avoid exciting the suspicions of the officers of the *Magicienne*, which was still lying off the river mouth. She had not been long at her old anchorage before a steam launch with a gaily fringed awning over the stern put out from the jetty under the citadel, and came gliding towards the yacht.

"There they come!" said Lorrain to her ladyship, who was standing with him on the deck. "Now I suppose I need hardly remind your ladyship of the fact that the best way to treat an enemy up to the outbreak of actual hostilities is with the most perfect courtesy and consideration. It is all the more necessary to do this when the enemy happens to be a woman."

"Oh, I fully understand that!" she laughed. "My late mistress, you know, used to visit at some very good houses indeed, and if you want to see good society with the paint off you must look at it from the servants' hall. In the drawing-room you only see the polish, but from below stairs you can see under the surface. I don't think you'll have much fault to find with my reception of Madame Sybil."

Lorrain had never admired her as much as he did when he watched her doing the honours of the yacht to the woman who was her worst and her most dangerous enemy. Women, as a rule, find it much easier to be agreeable to people they would like to kill than men do, and the frankness of her ladyship's cordiality was so perfect that it completely deceived even Madame Sybil herself, who, to her ladyship's great relief, didn't seem to have any knowledge of her son's having been on board the yacht. They lunched in the saloon, and after the afternoon siesta Lorrain had a long talk with the General and Captain Peters on the details of the expedition up the Ozama.

The yacht was to be left in charge of the first officer and the chief engineer, who had secret orders from Lorrain to permit no communication whatever with the shore, and to keep steam up ready for any emergencies. The expedition was to be composed of Captain Peters, the second officer, two quartermasters, and ten of the crew and twenty negro labourers and porters provided by Don Gregorio. Lorrain would of course be in supreme command, and her ladyship was to accompany him on mule-back. They dined that night at the palace, and when they had gone back on board the *Minnehaha* and the President and his lady had retired for the night, she said to him:

"You are sure that the boy was on board when they came here?"

"Yes, Querida, I saw him, and I asked the late Sir Langton who he was, and he told me that he was the son of a friend of his in England, and that they were going to take him home for a long holiday from the college at St. Thomas."

Then she said, with a sort of hiss running through her voice:

"If he was on board to-day they had him hidden away. If they didn't mean foul play why didn't they speak of him? Ah, yes, I see it now. When Lorrain saw me here last night he knew what would happen if I found the boy on board her. That is why he went out to sea this morning. They have murdered him, the poor little fellow—murdered him! I have not been as good to him myself as I might have been, but still he was my son and I would have seen that he had his rights, the rights which that mistress of Lorrain's has stolen from him. Now listen to me, Gregorio," she went on, putting her two white hands on the little man's shoulders, and looking down from her queenly height into his upturned eyes. "Whether this story you were telling me last night about the Gold Magnet is true or not, if you let these people leave this island alive I will leave it when they do, for if I have to follow them to the end of the earth I will do so, and if I have to wait twenty years for my revenge I will wait, but in the end they shall pay for what they have done. What a misfortune it was I didn't take Arthur away before! If I'd done that I might have gone to England now and taken the position that is mine by rights."

"Console yourself, Querida," he replied with a clumsy caress. "Console yourself, and when our treasury is full, as this magical needle shall make it, you shall have a position more brilliant than that. Meanwhile, have no fear about these people. Let them once get into the interior, and it shall be my business to see that they don't come back. I don't think Lorrain would give that thing up except with his life, and you can be quite sure that I don't mean to let him take it out of the island. Only let him get away from that ship and those infernal guns of hers, and you shall see what will happen."

About two hours after sunrise the next morning the expedition started, after Lorrain and her ladyship had drained a farewell glass of champagne with the President and Madame Sybil, and received their best wishes for the success of the enterprise, and shortly before sunset the same evening, a strange, white-painted craft with the hull and armament of a warship and the rigging of a yacht came rushing up from the southward at a tremendous speed, dipped the Stars and Stripes to the *Magicienne's* white ensign as she passed, and, slowing down as she entered the bay, dropped anchor about three hundred yards outside the berth occupied by the *Minnehaha*.

(To be continued.)

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By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

As the Wives of Scripture.

"I must go away," said Meresia, bursting in upon Elizabeth, who had denied herself to visitors. "You got my letter saying I was coming, and that I wanted to see you alone?"

"Yes. What is the trouble now?"

"A feverish unrest, a burning desire to be on the move, a horror of home and the domestic circle, which consists of Alfonso and myself. He has engagements to-day, both afternoon and evening, so I am free. Now, Elizabeth, dear, you must get your maid to toss a tea-jacket into a bag, pack your things for the night, and come down to Brighton with me for a breath of sea air. I've telegraphed for rooms at the Norfolk Hotel, where I stayed last winter, after influenza, you remember. Oh! don't look as if you were going to back out of it; don't say no, unless you would drive me to despair and an early grave!"

"But I have a dinner engagement this evening."

"What is that in comparison with my health, perhaps my reason? Send a special messenger with a letter to say you are called away by a sick friend—sick in soul and mind. The body is always considered, but the mind may suffer torments, agonies, and the only name we give it is—Depression!"

Meresia moved about the room restlessly as she spoke. She was not like her usual self. She talked quickly—a new thing for her—and did not pause to consider Elizabeth's convenience. The latter noticed that Meresia's cheeks were burning, unnaturally flushed, and her eyes, too, had the brightness of danger-signals, while she carried with her a convincing sense of trouble, which Elizabeth could not mistake.

"Why are you so anxious to go away?"

"Why does a woman want to escape her husband?" queried Meresia, raising her eyebrows and pausing in her walk.

"Because she does not love him, I suppose."

"Exactly! Imagine yourself perpetually in contact with a half of yourself that was absolutely distasteful—abhorrent to you. One whose opinions grew daily more impossible to agree with or re-echo—one who allowed you no voice in matters of importance, who laughed at your notions, derided your principles, checked your free will. You are thinking me terribly selfish; I see that in your face. Alfonso has made me so. It is the bad training. So pity, don't condemn. Have you decided to come, like the dear, good, generous creature you are?" Elizabeth laid her hand on Meresia's shoulder and felt her trembling with excitement.

"Yes," she said, "they will have to manage without me to-night. I will send the message."

Meresia sank into a chair with a sigh of relief.

"It has got on my nerves—this existence with Alfonso. Once I had a well-balanced mind, governed by moderation, now I cannot keep my faculties in bounds or order. They seem to run away with me. I sometimes think I am hardly accountable for what I say and do. You are the tonic I most require. These London fogs choke me. To-day we shall breathe the sea. But you must be quick, Elizabeth, for I have looked out a train, and there is no time to spare. My luggage is outside. We will drive straight to the station."

Miss James proved a good friend and a true one to those she really loved, and Meresia was very near her heart. Elizabeth's firm, self-reliant nature pitied the passing moods of the younger woman.

"You are feeling things far too keenly, Meresia," she said, "little things that hardly matter."

"Perhaps they are not so little as you think. But I cannot tell you all."

"It is the old story, dear. I warned you long ago. You are the sort of woman to make her own tragedy. You meet sorrows half way, and taking them by the hand, lead them on, walk with them, talk with them, and, finally, fall under their influences at the moment you most desire to escape. So when the dark hours come—and the difficulties—you cannot tide them over, as I have tided many troubles, either by ignoring them or making them objects of ridicule and sarcasm."

"No," said Meresia, "that is quite incomprehensible to me. I have not grasped such a situation. I never could. My marriage was my great mistake, or rather his. Don't let us talk of it, Elizabeth, or perhaps I shall tell you some of my thoughts, and then you will hate me, and not be good to me any more."

In less than half-an-hour, Elizabeth was ready to start, and together they drove to the station, Meresia childishly delighted at having got her away.

"Now I am almost happy," she said as they settled themselves in the Pullman car. "Oh! I forgot to get a paper," springing out, "wait for me, Elizabeth, I shall not be a minute."

Meresia returned quickly, her face paler than before.

"Look," she whispered, "look at that man passing the window now."

"With the small red moustache and light-coloured eyes?"

"Yes."

"What of him? A most ordinary individual. Why does he interest you?"

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"I see him wherever I go," said Meresia; "always that man!"

"He is in your circle. It often happens so."

Mrs. Aladros shrugged her shoulders impatiently. Surely Elizabeth was strangely dense to-day.

"Perhaps," said Miss James, seeing Meresia dissatisfied at the explanation, "he follows you purposely. If so, the man is wonderfully presumptuous, for he is certainly not an attractive admirer."

"I know he shadows me, but as to admiration——"

Meresia laughed, and dismissed the subject by pretending to read.

"You are full of fears and imaginations," said Elizabeth. "You don't suppose he is a robber?"

"No."

"Well, then, why should he wish to shadow your steps?"

"There are more reasons than two in the world," replied Meresia. "Think again."

"I give it up. What! you are not going to tell me? I don't believe you have any clear ideas on the subject yourself, for all your wise looks. How about a visit to Dr. Serano when you get back to town? He is a wonderful man for nerves."

"I have been to him already, and he can do nothing for me. His treatment only makes me worse."

The train moved slowly out of the station, and with the motion Meresia's spirits rose. She talked vaguely on many subjects, and appeared quite happy as they emerged from London fog to bright sunshine.

"It only seems like a few minutes," she said, when Brighton was reached, and they drove along the crowded front to the hotel. "We will rest, unpack, have tea, and go out for a blow afterwards, if you are willing, Elizabeth. I feel as if a little walk would do me good."

"Certainly; please yourself in everything, I don't care what I do," replied Elizabeth cheerfully. "I am here as sick nurse to a troubled mind, and the only wage I demand is a complete cure, that my patient may prove a credit."

"Sit in this comfortable chair by the fire, while I take my things out, Elizabeth. This is the dressing-bag Alfonso gave me when I married him. It is like him, very large and superior! I don't suppose you have ever met anything approaching Alfonso's superiority. He looks on himself as a little god—or rather a big god—among men. His judgment is absolutely correct; he, like the king, can do no wrong——"

Meresia spoke bitterly, then, with a curl of her lip, and a defiant raising of her head, she continued:

"At least I have escaped him for a few hours, he does not know that I am here. I merely left word to say I was staying away until to-morrow. The last time I did that he followed me. To-night he is not coming home till quite late——"

"You came away and did not tell him," broke in Elizabeth. "Really, Meresia, that was not quite fair towards me. Your husband will be naturally anxious to know where you are. If I had realised your relations were so strained, I should not have aided and abetted their further severance. It seems a tactless, foolish move of yours—this aimless visit to Brighton."

"He may be annoyed, but if he says that he was anxious, I have a very good reply. Alfonso professes to know all my movements without my telling him. You see, he poses as practically supernatural, and it is rather pleasant sometimes to prove him mistaken. Dear Elizabeth, don't be angry. It does not sit well on you, and I am so happy, with miles of railway lines between me and Alfonso."

Meresia's voice was so low and seductive, Elizabeth could not find it in her heart to continue her lecture.

"You won't think it at all wrong of me after tea," Mrs. Aladros assured her, "but early lunch always makes you unpleasantly virtuous. Put yourself in my place, Elizabeth."

"My dear, I could not do that, for I should never, under your circumstances, have come to be in that place. You married a man because his nature was stronger than yours—the result should not surprise you."

Meresia soon contrived to get back into her friend's good books, and Alfonso's name was no longer mentioned between them.

They went for their stroll by the sea, chanced to meet several acquaintances, and returned refreshed in mind and body.

"I shall slip into a teagown for dinner," said Meresia, going to her room.

The passage was empty, and as she flung open her door she was humming a tune she had heard on a barrel organ outside the hotel. For a moment she did not turn up the electric light, but tossed her muff on the bed, and unwound her boa in the glow of the fire.

Suddenly she was aware of a figure seated in the large arm chair, drawn near the grate with its back to her.

For a moment her heart stood still; she could neither move nor speak. Then, with a little cry, she rushed to the door and turned on the electric light.

"Thanks; it was getting rather dark," said Aladros.

Meresia stared, as if seeing a vision, with parted lips and dilating eyes. He stretched his arms as though he had been asleep, and watched her quietly.

"I—I was not expecting you," she faltered, at a loss for words.

"No; but I don't like you staying about in hotels without me. I have come at great personal inconvenience, so do not let it occur again."

"I am not alone; Elizabeth is here."

"I know; but I do not care to trust you with Miss James. Besides, your erratic ways are growing tiresome; I've had about enough of them. It is a wife's duty to submit to her husband, and obey him. If you don't learn your duty soon, Meresia, I shall take steps to teach you."

"It seems," she answered coldly, her voice vibrating with scorn, "that you have taken them already, or else how did you know I was here? You have not been home, and I cannot imagine your intuition being quite so correct as you would have me believe. The days of fairy tales are over; I want the truth."

"Oh! curiosity, thy name is Meresia!" he said scoffingly.

He still lay back in the big chair, while his wife stood against the door for support.

Now she came slowly forward, so that the heat of the fire scorched her dress as she leant with one elbow on the mantelpiece and her eyes on Aladros.

"You have paid somebody to spy upon me," she said. "Do you think I have not guessed it? Am I so dull, so senseless, as not to see that my steps are dogged. I have done nothing wrong, my only crime is that of avoiding you."

"The greatest of all crimes in my eyes," he answered, and she could not tell from his tone if this were flattery or sarcasm.

"How dare you, Alfonso, how dare you treat me in such a manner? Can you deny, that for the last week you have known my every movement through hiring detectives to shadow me? Is that not the grossest insult you could pay a woman?"

"You deserve this—and more," he answered, "for your folly. If I please, I shall have you watched, but it is neither pleasant for you nor for me. All I want is to teach you submission. When you realise that I am your master—that I cannot be thrown aside like a plaything of which you are tired—then perhaps things may go smoothly again. All this unruliness I date from the day of that publication concerning my dealings with certain prisoners in Spain. Such a childish exhibition of temper as you displayed is not a very elevating memory."

"Those dealings were vile," she said, choking back her rising passion. "They entered into my heart and my blood, and contaminated any softer feelings that I had for you."

"Then you are at enmity with me still?"

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Meresia paused to think, and the working of her brain was quick and decisive.

To feign submission, to win freedom from suspicion by acting the part of a hypocrite, would not that even be better than beating her wings against a barred cage?

An expression of meekness and surrender stole stealthily over Meresia's face.

"Look at me, Alfonso. Am I so difficult to tame?"

He saw a quivering smile part her lips and tears gather in her eyes; eyes with "just that soft shade of green we sometimes see in evening skies."

She knelt down on the hearthrug at his feet.

"You conquered me in the past. You conquer me again. I will be dutiful as the wives of Scripture. I will bow down before the judge!"

CHAPTER XX.

COALS OF FIRE.

"DON'T hurry, I'm early," said Bertie Haydon.

José Serano went to his desk, sealed a letter, and addressed it. His old school fellow, standing on the hearthrug watching him, marvelled that success had changed the man so little.

In evening dress, and by artificial light, José looked scarcely older than when he had left for Spain.

Bertie recalled their last walk together by the Serpentine, José's blasphemous toss, when the coin rolled into the water, and his mocking words as to his fortunes in the future. He had prophesied that his old pal would meet him as a beggar in the streets, and hear him plead in the stock phrase of the professional alms seeker:

"*Por el amor de Dios, senorito,*" etc, etc.

Instead—though he had returned to England in a humble position—Bertie had not met him until Fortunatus smiled afresh.

"I've been trying to write that letter for the last month," said José, tossing it upon a pile of others. "It goes to Madrid, where all my recollections are bitter and impossible to forget. But I should not say all," he added, after a pause, "I have been answering a long unacknowledged letter from the good old priest who converted me to the Catholic faith. It will be full of disappointments for him, and yet he still prays for me."

José smiled as he spoke, and the light now full on his face revealed lines which told of suffering and thought. For the first time Bertie noticed his hair was streaked with grey, and he was puzzled, because of the boyish manner adopted by José in his presence.

"We are dining at the Berkeley," he said, "a party of eight, and going on to the Gaiety. I find people like an amusement that neither taxes their brains nor upsets their liver. This style of play is singularly harmless, everything is harmless that does not make one think. Do you know I've had six Ibsen patients during the last week—people who have been reading morbid literature, and sitting out unwholesome, indigestible plays. They are difficult subjects to treat, too, especially as I am obliged to christen their complaints."

The two men drove to the Berkeley, and waited in the hall for the arrival of José's guests. He knew the best people in London, and was universally popular.

"Who is that fellow staring at you?" asked Bertie.

José glanced across in the direction indicated, and a flash of recollection broke in upon him. Recognition was mutual, as the stranger advanced with outstretched hand.

"I hope I am not forgotten, Mr. Serano?"

José answered warmly that no English face met in Madrid had escaped his memory.

"How long ago is it exactly?" he said. "Let me see; I cannot recall the date, though I remember our dinner that evening in the café, to the very courses we consumed together. Though I can neither offer you a *puchero*, a *pisto*, or *sopa de cebollas*, will you give me the pleasure of your company to-night? My friends will be here directly, and if you don't mind being odd man out——"

"I hardly like to accept, for I shall make your party uneven."

José's guests arrived as he spoke, all except one, Gregory Merriman.

"He promised to come a week ago," said Serano, "but I have seen or heard nothing of him since. Yesterday I expected him to lunch, but he did not turn up."

"Then, instead of an encumbrance, I may prove a useful stop-gap," said the late invited guest, as Serano introduced him to a charming girl in yellow, who bore the stamp of those who would always wear silken dresses, feed on dainty food, and live in idleness.

"Who has failed you?" asked Bertie as they went in to dinner and settled themselves compactly at a round table by the window.

"Gregory. I can't think what has become of the fellow," replied José.

"Oh! didn't you know he was ill? Awfully ill, I was told. Touch and go, so they said at the club. I forget what was the matter with him. I wonder you were not sent for."

"I don't visit the Merrimans, and they have their family doctor," replied José. "Poor boy! He is quite the pick of the bunch. I hope he may pull through."

A gloom seemed to have fallen on their host, and José was less talkative than usual. After dinner he gave Bertie the tickets for the stalls, and begged his friends to excuse him, as he had a patient to see. So, taking a doctor's license, he escaped fulfilling his social duties, shunting them on to the very capable shoulders of his old schoolfellow.

Gratitude is almost an unknown quantity in the hearts of the human race, but with José it grew instead of diminished with time. It was no small thing to him the memory of Gregory's stammered sympathy and proffered help in the dark days of poverty and loneliness. He would have done much for him or Bertie Haydon, his only true friends at the time of Miss Betts' death.

So burying his animosity for Mrs. Merriman and her husband, he drove straight to their house, and was shown into the empty drawing-room to await an interview.

The alterations were few in spite of the lapse of time.

Miss Betts' photograph had been moved from its prominent position to a back shelf, and placed in a shabby frame. He remembered it was once honoured by the gorgeous setting that now held Mrs. Merriman's latest portrait, taken in full evening dress.

There was the hush of illness in the house, and the drawing-room wore a deserted air. A large pot of chrysanthemums were left faded and brown by the piano, the fire had sunk to mere cinder and ash.

Presently the rustle of a skirt announced Mrs. Merriman's advent. Her eyes were very red, as if from crying, and heavy for want of sleep.

José went quickly forward, and took her hand.

"I'm so thankful you've come," she said, "we did not like to ask you, though Gregory repeatedly mentions your name. You see, since your return to England, you entirely broke the old connection, and we naturally felt there must be a reason, some offence or misunderstanding. It has been a great sorrow both to my husband and myself, for as a boy we were so much attached to you, and then when I think of my dear sister, and all her——"

"I have come to talk of Gregory," interrupted José brusquely, "for the rest we will let it pass. What is the good of raking up old troubles?—they are better forgotten."

"My poor boy—oh! my poor Gregory!" cried Mrs. Merriman, dissolving into tears.

"I only heard he was ill this evening," said José.

"Why, for the last three nights I have hardly slept an hour, and our doctor—an old family doctor—seems at the end of his resources. This morning I lost all patience with him. I am afraid I was very rude. He did not come in the

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afternoon as we expected. My husband says he overheard me call him a fool to his face, but I have no recollection of saying anything so dreadful. When I am thoroughly upset I lose my head. He has mismanaged Gregory shamefully, and now there are complications! You have a great reputation—your cleverness is well known. Will you save him?"

Mrs. Merriman trembled as she spoke. She could not blind herself to the fact that Gregory's life was in danger.

Before José could reply a note was brought in from the doctor. Mrs. Merriman read the contents aloud:

"'DEAR MADAM—

"'Having expressed your opinion of me so frankly this morning, I think it would be advisable if you sent for some one else, in whom you could repose more confidence.'"

"That is fortunate," said José, "now there can be no question of outraging professional etiquette. Take me to Gregory's room."

The very sight of José seemed to calm Mrs. Merriman, and bring comfort to her soul.

"Gregory will get better now," she said confidently.

It looked as if her words were destined to come true, for her son, in spite of his weakness, grew brighter and apparently stronger as José bent over him.

"You won't leave me," he said, "you will stay and see me through this, old fellow."

José nodded.

"Of course," he said, "of course."

Gregory had at the best but a poor constitution, and was suffering from a severe inflammatory attack. Mrs. Merriman was quite right in voting the case shamefully mismanaged.

José's skill needed taxing to its fullest to undo the mischief already wrought. Unfailingly he watched his patient night after night, staying in the house, spending most of the hours at Gregory's bedside, till the crisis was over, and the corner turned. In vain the parents tried to express their gratitude, but he would listen to no word of thanks, and led them to understand his time was given up in personal friendship for Gregory, and not as a matter of business.

"I wish," said Mrs. Merriman to her husband—"I wish that we had done more for José when poor Harriet died."

"I don't know why you say 'more,'" he answered, "for I was not aware that we did anything."

"It was such a strange position," she continued, "and he really left England before we had time to settle anything. Of course I was upset at my sister's death, and I did not think. Now it is too late, and we can never repay him—never!"

A silence fell between them, for each stood convicted by conscience.

Gregory's convalescence meant a change into the country, and for a while he saw nothing of José, who vanished from the Merrimans' family circle as abruptly as he had entered it.

"So you have buried the hatchet, and made it up with Miss Betts' relations?" said Bertie, when next he met Serano.

"Yes," replied José, "I bore them a grudge, but it is a bothering thing to carry about, and Gregory was a brick when they were broken reeds."

"I met Mrs. Aladros last night," said Bertie. "What is the matter with her?"

"How should I know, my dear fellow? I have not been called in."

"She has changed since she married."

"They often do, Bertie; it sort of unsettles them. There is only one thing that tries a woman more than marriage, and that is, to be left high and dry without it! But what particular alteration do you complain of in Mrs. Aladros?"

"Well, you see," said Bertie Haydon, "I was rather a particular pal of Meresia's in old days, and I'm not so sure I shouldn't have married her myself if she'd given me the chance. I never saw anyone so perfectly contented, and with such a happy way of living her own life openly, fearlessly, and letting other people live theirs without remark or comment. Now she seems ill at ease, nervous, jaded—driven I might almost say—and a perfect slave to her husband. By jove! what an exacting brute he is! One can tell that at a glance. Meresia asked me last night if I thought she looked older. She said she could not judge for herself, as she got so used to the woman in the looking-glass. I told her 'yes,' that she had aged in the last month. I consider her young enough to bear these truths. It was the first time I had spoken the truth for a fortnight. The next task I set myself was to discover the reason of the change, but Meresia proved evasive. I led the subject gently to her husband. 'I suppose—you—er—hit it off capitally together—eh?' She looked straight at me with those odd green eyes, and smiled. 'If it comes to hitting,' she said, 'Alfonso is the stronger; I am like a feather in the hands of a giant, or the paws of a lion.'"

"You should have told her the story," replied José, "of the gust of wind that came and blew the feather away; weak and light, it was whirled on—on—by the gale, far out of the lion's reach, even beyond the sound of his roar! Tell her that, Bertie, next time; tell her that!"

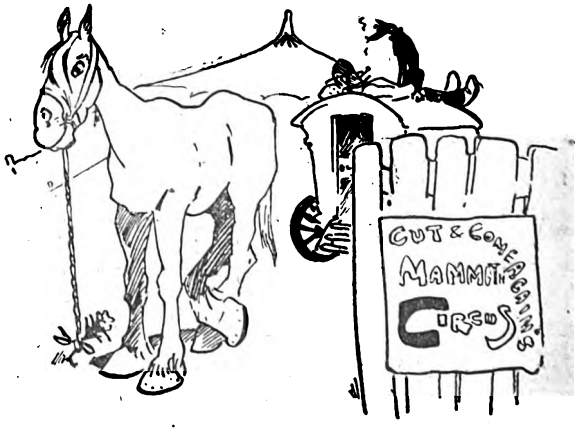
José spoke in quick, excited tones, which carried Bertie back to the days of their boyhood.

"I say," he stammered, "you—you are not—interested in Meresia?"

"You mean am I in love with the wife of Aladros? No! The woman he owns is defiled in my eyes almost beyond respect, but remains still within the limitless range of pity. He has killed the girl he married; can't you see that she is dead, and the thing new born in her place is a caricature, badly executed by our friend Aladros? He has remodelled his clay clumsily, those great fingers lack artistic feeling. Meresia is what he has made her. From an angel she will grow into a devil, so soon as the hour is ripe and the clay sets."

(To be continued.)

Signor McCoy, the great and wonderful circus horse whose pranks have caused readers of the BIG BUDGET such laughter, is now at Barnum and Bailey's Circus, Olympia. Those who live in or near London should not miss seeing this magnificent charger.



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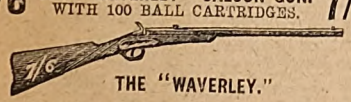

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YOUR ESTEEMED INQUIRY DULY TO HAND.

THE guinea offered for the most absurd amalgamation of two well-known proverbs has been won by Mr. Joseph Percival, 166, Oldham Road, Ashton-under-Lyne.

BELOW will be found letters and asterisks indicating certain places in the British Isles. Each asterisk represents a letter. To the person who first correctly names the places a guinea will be sent. All attempts to be sent on post-cards. Place the numbers and your solution against each. Date of closing, Monday, January 17th.

1. A * * * * * * N
2. B * * * * * * N
3. C * * * * * N
4. D * * * * * Y
5. L * * * * * * * R

W. K. E.—There is no secret made of the fact that the Pope's yearly income exceeds £600,000, including the numerous "thank offerings" he receives every year from all parts of the globe.

WHEELER writes to point out the singular fact that nearly all cyclists depend principally upon the right foot to push the machine along. "This," he says, "may be proved by examining the balls on a crank axle, those on one side will be found to be worn much more than those on the other. This is owing to the greater strain that is exerted upon the right side."

AN ADMIRER asks: "Why do the officers of the British Army so often appear in mufti when off duty?" ———The reason officers do not constantly wear uniform is that once in a time of absurd irritation that this country should possess so large a standing army, the Duke of Wellington ordered all officers to wear plain clothes when not on duty, so that no one could point to the well-dressed defenders of our country and tremble at their numbers.

E. R.—No, the Bank of England is not the oldest bank in London. Snow's, Hoare's, and Child's were all established some time before it.

MAJOR.—The average edition of a book is a thousand copies.

DOLLY comes along with a frivolingly curious question, which, however, must have perplexed many other of our lady readers at some time or another. "When my lover kisses me," she asks, "is it correct for me to raise my veil?" ———According to the strictest rules of etiquette, you need not, although probably your lover would prefer that you did, and in a question like this his opinion should have first consideration.

VIC wants to know if animals ever faint.———Yes, they do sometimes, but more rarely than human beings. When they do, it is always caused either by extreme physical pain or great heat, and never by a sudden shock to the nervous system, which is not sufficiently high developed.

LANDRAIL.—The expression should always be spelt "all right," and never "alright," as you suggest.

F. S.—The south-west wind prevails more than any other in this country by fifty-four days in the year. This accounts for the fact that many of our forest trees lean towards the east, which is particularly noticeable in the poplar on account of the great softness and flexibility of its wood.

A. L. W. asks: "How is it that people who have red hair are so often possessed of a fiery temperament to match?" ———Scientists say that red hair is a sign of a superabundance of iron in the blood, and that it is the matter that enters the red hair that imparts the vigour, the elasticity, the great vitality, the overflowing, thoroughly healthy animal life which runs through the veins of the ruddy haired, and this strong, sentient animal life is what renders them more intense in their emotions than their more languid fellow creatures.

W. W.—The value of the British Crown jewels is estimated to be about £3,000,000.

YES, PATRICK, you are quite right in asserting that your countrymen are, on an average, taller than either the Scotch or the English. Most people have an idea that the Scotsmen have the palm for stature, but my authority is a very learned professor, who makes it his business to measure representatives of the different races.

T. P. asks: "How much gas does a ton of coal contain?" ———Almost 10,000ft.

NOVICE is invited to a dinner party, and before going he would like to know whether he should offer the right or left arm to the lady he escorts to the dining-room.———It depends upon circumstances: If you have to go down a flight of stairs to reach the dining-room you should offer the lady the arm which is nearer the wall and further away from the banisters, so that her dress may not rub against them. Should, however, the dining-room be upon the ground floor, it would be more correct to offer the right arm.

N. B. D. wants to know if there is any difference between a life "assurance" and a life "insurance."———It is incorrect to speak of a life "insurance" at all; that expression is only used in a policy against fire. A life policy is always spoken of as an "assurance."

K. G.—£10,000 is the yearly salary of the President of the United States.

R. W.—Londoners keep almost as many medical men busy looking after their ailments as do all the inhabitants of Scotland and Ireland put together. This fact disproves your statement that Scotsmen and Irishmen are not healthier than the inhabitants of our great city.

L. P. T. was married a few weeks ago, and writes to ask if I can furnish him with the name and address of the "idiot" who first introduced the shoe-throwing mania on these occasions. He is still suffering from a protuberance upon his head caused by that part of him coming into contact with an old shoe thrown at it by a well-meaning friend, and he would therefore like to interview the originator upon the subject.——— That would be rather a difficult matter, I am afraid, and L. T. P. will have to bottle his wrath this time, for the custom dates back to the time of the Israelites, when an old foot-cover was always included with any property one man might give another. It signifies that the bride's father has now no more control over her.

PEASANT.—The best kind of cow you can keep is a Kerry. For good, all-round usefulness no other breed can beat them.

FABER.—Only three people know the password of the Tower of London, and they are the Queen, the Lord Mayor, and the Constable. This password is sent to the Lord Mayor quarterly, signed by Her Majesty. It is merely a survival of an old custom.

S. Y. asks: "Is the speed of a lion or tiger much greater than that of a man?" ———For a short distance a lion or a tiger can proceed at the rate of a fast horse, and thus easily outstrip a man; but they lose their wind at the end of about half a mile. They have little endurance, and are remarkably weak in lung power.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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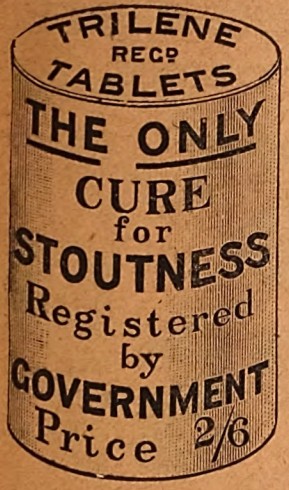

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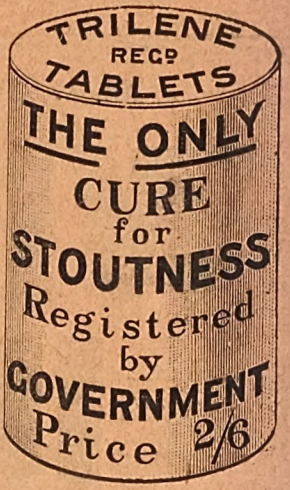

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.

"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONEAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 2lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

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MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

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MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

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MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 473. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 22ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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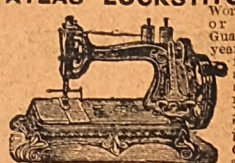

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No. 473.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 22nd, 1898.

FITZHUGH:

CLOWN AND JUGGLER.

YOUNG FITZHUGH was a man of his word; and now that he found the amateur circus was an assured thing—in fact, was to come off within the week—he determined to do his best for its success according to his promise.

To be sure, if he chose to back out, it might well be said in his defence that the promise had been extracted from him under pressure; also, that when he had said he would lend a hand in any way the committee might see fit, the duty of impersonating a clown had not been presented to him as a possibility.

The committee had treated him shabbily, he felt. To run about a ring with a white face and a bald white head seemed almost indecent. To turn somersaults, perform tricks, and "in general"—in the language used in describing to him his duties—"to give the affair a dash and swing, and to fill up the necessary pauses in the performance with any tumbling and devilry that his imagination might suggest," this, he feared, was beyond him. However, he would stick to his word.

There was some comfort in the fact that Cushing was to be the other clown. Cushing, by-the-way, was delighted with the prospect; he was something of an acrobat, and at the Athletic Club had been known to turn several hand-springs in succession. To be sure, he would

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afterwards sit for some minutes on the edge of the mattress, panting for breath, and at the second attempt rarely succeeded in more than two somersaults, the last ending usually on his back—which was amateurish. However, as this was more than any man in the club could do, he had come to regard himself as a sort of phenomenon. He had other accomplishments; he could balance a wand on the end of his nose, could keep a dull knife and two billiard balls in the air at once, and had been known occasionally even to rise from a sitting posture to his feet, without interfering with his jugglery by losing more than one billiard ball, or possibly the knife.

For these reasons, and with the expectation of adding to his *répertoire* in the next few days, he was enabled to look forward to the night of performance with a pleasant confidence.

Satisfied beyond doubt of completely extinguishing any attempts of Fitzhugh, indeed, of casting him quite into the shade, as the days went by he even became distressed for his chum, who appeared to be giving the matter absolutely no thought.

"Look here, Fitzhugh, my boy!" he had said, "you aren't a blooming genius. You can't expect inspiration on the moment. Here I've been working night and day, and in spite of a natural gift for the thing, you know, I really doubt very much if, after all, I shall be extremely remarkable. Come," he cried, moved by a spirit of generosity and snatching up a knife, "let me show you how to cut yourself in two; immensely effective, I assure you."

But Fitzhugh had only yawned and said he thought he'd go home to bed; and as he strolled away from the club, he left his friend shaking his head sadly—the knife still in his hand.

It was after midnight when Fitzhugh reached his house in Marlborough Street, and let himself in with his latch-key. The servants were in bed, and he proceeded at once to his rooms on the second floor, looking about him expectantly. Yes, there they were, sent home that evening as he had directed—a number of packages from the costumiers, and in a corner, leaning against the wall, his wonderful new legs, finished just in time, as the performance was to come off the next night.

In fact, Fitzhugh had not been as idle as Cushing had thought. For the past week he had been shut up for hours each day in the workshop of a master carpenter and at great expense had had these legs built.

He felt that they were to be the novelty of the show.

They were undoubtedly curious affairs; a sort of stilt, to be strapped on the feet and legs, and on which, upon touching a spring, he would slowly mount into the air, his trousers keeping pace with his growth until he had reached an enormous elevation. Upon touching another spring these stilts would apparently shrink, double up, as it were, upon themselves, his trousers falling in many folds about his feet, as he gradually resumed his height.

He considered that there would be something striking in this gradual stretching out of his person, and hoped that to do this at various intervals throughout the evening might, perhaps, compensate for his inefficiency in other respects. When he was not growing, he intended to sit quietly on the edge of the ring and watch Cushing make a fool of himself.

It was a warm night; Fitzhugh opened his windows and determined to have a dress rehearsal. He whitened his face, making his eyes and mouth look rather more ghastly than necessary, by the use of red paint; he then stretched over his hair a piece of white kid, which he plastered tightly across his forehead, and fastened at the back of his neck and above his ears. A pair of bushy white eyebrows, which he next put on were extremely effective.

His clothes were all white, and consisted of a loose upper garment and a pair of baggy breeches, which, when he thrust his hands into the hip pockets and distended them laterally, attained an additional breadth that was amazing. He strapped the patent legs on first, and then put the baggy breeches over them.

These legs had broad wooden feet and were embellished with white kid slippers and pink rosettes. A tall, white felt hat completed his equipment. Then, standing before a mirror, he touched the spring and watched.

His eyes naturally were fixed upon his limbs; these grew beautifully and were giving him exquisite satisfaction, when, happening to look up, he was horrified to observe that his head was nowhere to be seen, having passed the level of the glass. In a second he felt the ceiling pressing his cap tightly over his eyes. There was not a moment to lose. With a quick movement he threw himself into a chair, and placing his legs on the window-sill, was gratified to observe the white kid slippers slowly disappear into the night.

Apparently at a distance of eight or ten feet they came to a stop. It was a close shave; his extremities shuddered for a moment, nervously, and one of the slippers was shaken off and fell into the yard below. This annoyed him.

He waited patiently for several minutes, but, observing no further change, he with some difficulty found the proper spring, and touching this, saw his feet gradually withdraw into the room until he was restored to a Christian length.

For some time he rested in his chair, puffing quietly at his pipe. Then he decided to go and hunt up the slipper. He groped his way clumsily downstairs and out into the yard, where the moon was shining brightly and the air was crisp and pleasant. It was a great relief from the hot room above, and he leant easily against the house, chuckling as he thought of his startling reflection in the mirror, and of the prodigious effect he would create the next night. He smoked his pipe and meditated with satisfaction over Cushing's somersaults and jugglery.

Circuses, after all, weren't half bad.

Suddenly he heard a heavy footfall and the noise of a key thrust into a lock; the next moment the gate of the yard swung slowly open, and a man entered.

Fitzhugh was a man who thought quickly; he knew it must be the night watchman, an arrant old coward, and on the instant he decided upon his course of action.

Retreat was impossible; to explain his identity under such a disguise was not to be thought of. Besides, here was a dress rehearsal with a vengeance, an opportunity of putting his costume and legs to a most critical test. He determined to do them full justice.

The watchman slowly entered the yard, humming a tune and jingling his keys, after the habit of his race, as a warning to thieves to take themselves off and avoid a mutually unpleasant encounter. Fitzhugh crouched close against the wall and waited until the man was well within the yard; then, with a low, hollow sound, such as he fancied would be appropriate, he stepped into view and touching the spring, began slowly to mount towards the sky.

It must have been a wonderful sight, this bald, white

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creature, with bushy white eyebrows, and ghastly mouth (not to mention the huge white slippers and the pink rosettes), lit up by the moon's light, and slowly towering higher and higher into the air. When half way he unexpectedly extended his breeches, upon which the watchman sank in a heap on the pavement.

So far all had gone well; his costume was a pronounced success, and Fitzhugh should have been content to withdraw quietly indoors. It was very certain he would not be pursued. But unluckily his appetite was merely whetted, and shaking himself to make sure that the mechanism was intact, he proceeded to bear down upon the unfortunate man, working his mouth into the most dreadful contortions, and spreading his breeches until they looked like spinnakers on either side of an attenuated mast.

The outcome was disastrous. Flesh and blood could not stand such a sight. With a howl so blood-curdling and sustained, that the whole neighbourhood at once sat up in their beds, the watchman, now little better than a madman, discharged his revolver into the air, and rushed, howling, from the alley.

Fitzhugh got back to his room with what speed he could, and rang for his man, who bandaged his arm, and unstrapped and washed him, and helped him to a sofa. The next morning he was ordered to bed by his doctor, and placed on hot water bottles, and a diet of milk.

* * * * *

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening, and Fitzhugh lay stretched out in his bed, gazing critically at apparently the very same object that had had such a disastrous effect upon the watchman the night before, except that this object had attained his growth, and appeared to be pretty much of the height of Fitzhugh in a normal state.

"Yes, you'll do," said Fitzhugh slowly, and then continued with more animation: "Now, mind your directions; the slighest slip, the mere opening of your mouth, might make a hash of the whole business. The show begins at eight o'clock. You are to drive to the hall in my brougham, which will await your return, and, as it is now just five minutes before the hour, you are sure to find the thing in full blast and the way clear by the time you arrive. You must leave in the same way, a little before the end, for the danger of a chance encounter with one of the performers, and especially with the other clown, is what is most to be dreaded. So much for that. As to what you do in the ring, I don't care much. Turn a few somersaults—by the way, do you juggle, play with billiard balls and knives and such things in the air?"

"Yes," said the man quietly.

"Ah! that's capital. Cushing will be charmed with you. I will leave the particulars to you, then. But remember, make your exit early, and drive back here, so that I may hear the news and pay you the money." The man made an odd, foreign bow, and left the room, and in a moment Fitzhugh heard the brougham drive rapidly away.

He leant back on the pillows with a sigh of relief. His arm pained a good deal, for the watchman's bullet had made a nasty wound, over which at another time he would have growled savagely. As it was, however, he had given it little thought through the day, for he had been entirely absorbed in his plans for the evening. It was useless to notify the committee; to say that he was laid up, that, much to his disappointment, it would be impossible for him to take part in the show; and then upon inquiry refuse to give any particulars as to the cause of his indisposition, would have been at once to pronounce himself a sham. His preparations for the affair had been so desultory that, as he well knew, his eagerness to participate could never stand such a test. Of course, to describe the episode with the watchman was impossible. No, there must be a substitute of his own getting, who must be palmed off as himself.

But whom to get! Savage knew everything. He called his man, told him what he wanted, and sent him off with directions to agree to any terms so long as he found a decent, respectable fellow who would not disgrace him. And the fellow was obtained, as we have seen, and his name—though this Fitzhugh did not as yet know—appeared on the posters as "Mons. Callistrau," a gentleman who was at that time drawing an enormous salary at the Palace of Pleasure in Tremont Street, and was generally considered to be the most wonderful juggler and master of legerdemain that the world had ever seen. He had at first refused Savage's offers, but eventually agreed to a sufficiently enticing figure, and one that later made Fitzhugh feel as if he had been hiring an assassin, at the least. However, the man was conscientious, and went to the circus and excelled himself.

He reached the ring a little late. He was under the impression that the other clown at the time was standing calmly and unflinchingly on his head—an addition to his *répertoire*; however, he soon forgot everything in the heat of his performance.

On his entrance, he attracted to himself the attention of the house by turning a series of easy, graceful somersaults from one end of the ring to the other, ending at the very edge, with a low bow and a sweep of the hand. It was merely what one can see any time at the professional circus, yet such agility in Fitzhugh aroused much astonishment. There was loud applause and shouts of "Bravo! bravo! old man!" from his men friends in the audience. Cushing, as he saw Fitzhugh turning lightly over the sawdust like an animated cart wheel, had at once come to his feet and stood gaping with astonishment.

But Fitzhugh was evidently bent on work, and behaved like a man well accustomed to applause, treating it at times with scant notice, but occasionally acknowledging the appreciation of his audience by sweeping bows made to all corners of the hall.

It would be tedious, and indeed impossible, to describe his performances in detail. They were naturally of a marvellous skill, and in the course of half-an-hour he held the entire audience and all the performers spellbound. Cushing had long forgotten all about his cunning little tricks, and was seated on a heap of sawdust at one side of the ring, lost in astonishment and admiration.

Not for a moment did the performer appear to notice the effect he was producing; he was calm, unhesitating, and trick succeeded trick with scarcely a pause or intermission. Men and women shuddered as they watched him toss long, skewer-like knives into the air and keep them spinning round and round with the rapidity and symmetry of a revolving wheel. Men who had travelled and seen the exhibitions of the practised jugglers of the East told each other that never had they seen anything to equal this daring and demoniac skill.

It was nearly nine; the man was again playing with the knives, and was in the performance of a marvellously intricate feat, when a bunch of violets, thrown by some

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enthusiastic and excited woman, struck him full in the face; for the moment he was blinded and helpless, his hands groping at random in the air, and the knives falling about him in a shower; one scratched his hand, and another struck him fairly on the arm, burying its long, sharp blade deep into the flesh. He uttered a cry, and drawing forth the knife threw it aside, and for a moment stood irresolute, the blood flowing freely from the wound. Then, snatching up the flowers, he bowed bravely, and turning, literally ran from the ring. The others followed, but he ran only the faster on through a long corridor, past the officer at the door and out into the street, where he was seen to jump into Fitzhugh's carriage and drive away.

Fitzhugh learnt little of the affair that night; the man, when he reached him, was weary and anxious to get away to his home; he described his wound as a scratch and stated briefly how it happened, and Fitzhugh paid him his money and let him go, making sure, first, that his identity had been in no way disclosed. He then slept happily through the night.

On the next morning, however, his trials began. By the first mail he was deluged with letters: letters from girls and from men, expressive of sympathy for his accident, and of unbounded praise; several boxes of flowers arrived through the day. The newspapers, too, were full of him, and one in particular fairly threw him into a fever, one in which for some reason he was portrayed in tights, with curly hair and firm countenance, knives flying about him, and one quivering in his arm. But it was not until several days later, when, with his arm in the sling, he went into his club for breakfast, that he realised the extent of his fame and the terrible nature of his punishment.

The men crowded round him as he entered the room, and stood about in a semi-circle as he sat down to his eggs and coffee, praising, questioning, blaming him for his years of non-activity, anticipating other performances in the near future, until Cushing, who alone in a corner was earnestly endeavouring to perfect himself in a certain feat involving a carafe of water and several dinner plates, unwittingly created a diversion much longed for by his friend, by dropping everything upon the floor.

It was in vain Fitzhugh pooh-poohed the matter, and said that any of them could do as well with a little practice. They only called him modest, and this put him in a rage. As he walked home sadly, many heads were thrust out of carriage windows, nodding to him brightly; sometimes a neatly gloved hand was waved, or two, perhaps, were placed palm to palm in token of applause. He was very unhappy; and when he reached his rooms and thought of the weeks that were before him, he made up his mind, in his usual impulsive way, to turn and run, to go abroad, and stay there until the affair was quite forgotten. Even this was a gloomy enough outlook, for he must go alone, of course.

Any companion he might find among his friends would be sure to hang upon the old tale, in fact would, in all probability, some stormy night, introduce him in the saloon to the entire ship's company as a very possible source of entertainment, and with an elaborate description of his former success.

So, by the first ship he sailed for Naples, without a good-bye or a word to anyone. That same evening at the club a lot of men were seated about a table smoking, when Cushing broke into the silence with a sudden inspiration.

"I have it!" he cried; "you fellows are wondering why Fitzhugh has gone abroad. It's the simplest thing in the world. Don't you see, the man is just brimful of ambition, and I'll bet a fortune he has gone off to India to study some new tricks from those skinny beggars—dervishes, you know. That's the trouble with this sleight-of-hand business," he went on, fingering nervously his cigar, a box of matches, and a small china ash receiver; "it grows on a man, becomes a sort of craving. If I had half of his natural ability, if I was not such a clumsy brute"—here the little ash receiver fell to the floor with a crash—"why, hang me if I would not have gone along with him myself!"

W. MACPHERSON WILTBANK.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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SIXTY or more years ago there flourished in France a class of bullies, the most detestable one could conceive, men who had perfected themselves in the use of arms, who gleefully boasted of the number of people they had done to death, and took rank accordingly, as a Red Indian brave takes rank by the number of scalps in his girdle.

One of these bravos, who styled himself Jules de la Magny, took up his residence in Lyons. Magny was a man of about forty, tall, rather slim, and of a military bearing. His very features, it was said, were intimidatory, his pale face, without a speck of colour, being crowned by coal black hair. His eyes were blacker still, and gave him a sinister aspect, which was increased when he assumed his cold smile. This scoundrel, who dressed elegantly, who dined on the best—he preyed on a rich widow, who adored him—and affected the most elegant and aristocratic manners, boasted that he meant to kill eight men before the year closed.

"I have a method," he said, "the method of progression. Last year it was seven, this year eight. Behold, it is September, and I have only accounted for five, so this city must supply me with three."

Incredible as it may seem, the picture is not overdrawn; these fiendish butchers, with their sensitive "honour," were regardless of life as an Eastern despot.

Monsieur de Magny opened his campaign at Lyons with a duel that pleased the citizens. There was already a minor bully in the town, who called himself Captain Ferreuse, and who had terrorised the law-abiding for some time.

It was only a week after De Magny's advent in the town that he insulted Captain Ferreuse in the Palais Café—the swell café of the city—one evening. He sat down at the same table as the captain, called for a glass of wine, and, when it was brought to him, swept the captain's glass off the table with his cane, saying to the waiter:

"Request this fellow to find another table, *garçon*, I like not the society of *canaille* (the scum)."

The captain replied by taking up De Magny's glass and throwing its contents in his face. Monsieur only smiled his cold smile, and wiped his face delicately with his perfumed handkerchief. The meeting took place an hour or two later, and, after a few passes, the captain fell with a gaping wound in his throat.

Decent people congratulated themselves, but soon they found that they only exchanged King Log for King Stork, and no man was safe.

Of course De Magny had his friends—there were always to be found a dozen or two who looked to him as their leader and chief and took pride from being recognised as a friend of so redoubtable a man.

Ernest Soleau was a young doctor in the city—a most able young man, who was steadily making a name for himself. He was respected by his equals and almost loved by the poor, from whom he would take no fee. Shortly after De Magny's advent to the City he was married, after a year's engagement, to a beautiful and charming girl, the daughter of a deceased colonel.

They were passionately devoted to each other, and it was a pure love match. They spent their honeymoon in Italy, where they stayed six weeks, it being the first holiday the doctor had given himself in three years.

On a Sunday afternoon, a week after their return, they were enjoying the sunshine in the public park. They were seated talking and laughing merrily, when by evil fortune Monsieur de Magny came by. Now it happened that on the day of his return Dr. Soleau had been called in to attend the seventh victim of De Magny, a barrister, who had been wantonly insulted and then killed.

The Doctor, as the bravo passed, could not help showing his loathing. The cold smile that meant death came on the face of the bully. He walked on a few yards, then turned back, and, ignoring the husband, he stopped before Madame Soleau, and with well-simulated politeness, said:

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"Good afternoon, madame; with your permission I will seat myself beside you, and we will chat together. I love to talk to the beautiful," with another bow.

Estelle, who had never heard of the bravo, turned her inquiring eyes on her husband, thinking the man was either drunk or a madman. Soleau's face became frightfully pale, and he controlled himself with the greatest difficulty, understanding well that De Magny was seeking to insult him.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are speaking to my wife, and you are offensive. Pray leave us."

De Magny affected neither to notice nor hear him. "Will madame give me permission to sit beside her or will she take my arm for a stroll? I find madame charming, and I adore charming women," and he made her another sweeping bow.

"Go away! go away!" said Estelle, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Monsieur, you are grossly offensive, I tell you," said Soleau, trembling with restrained passion. "Your behaviour is that of a cad."

"Ah," said De Magny, still affecting to ignore the husband, "madame is fatigued, and does not care to talk, I will leave madame, and will call upon her this evening. But permit me to anticipate this evening," and before husband and wife could guess what was coming, he had kissed her.

With a spring like a tiger's, Soleau was on him, beating him wildly about the face with his fists. Estelle screamed in terror, and several people who had witnessed the altercation at a little distance came up. De Magny, with a confused face, but with his demon's smile, had disengaged himself, and was asking for satisfaction.

"Satisfaction! Yes," cried the young doctor, "satisfaction and your deserts!"

The meeting took place early the next morning. There could only be one result—considering between disparity and skill, it was a duel between wolf and lamb. With the glee of a fiend, De Magny played with his victim, giving him a wound for every blow, as he said, finishing with a thrust in the left side. Ten minutes later Estelle was a widow.

It was not until her husband was brought home to her dead that she learnt that he had gone out to inevitable death, that De Magny had purposely insulted her, and it was, in fact, most deliberate murder, sanctioned by the false code of so-called "honour," under which the vilest and most bloodthirsty wretches could commit the most inhuman murders with impunity.

It was the most heartrending tragedy those present, when the body was taken home, had ever witnessed. In her eyes there was none like her husband, so clever, so handsome, so sure of becoming one of France's great sons. And now he lay dead by the hand of a vile monster.

She knelt beside the corpse, calling on him, now in yearning accents, now in the softest and gentlest tones of entreaty, now with a smile, to speak to her, to say one word. Mercifully she fell beside him. For a week she lay unconscious on the verge of death, and only by most devoted and skilful attention of a professional friend of her husband—Dr. Leres—was her life saved.

"You have been cruelly kind," she said to him when she was recovering. "It would have been truer kindness to let me die. But now I have been restored to life, I will devote it to ridding the earth of that monster. He shall die—by a just Heaven, I swear it!"

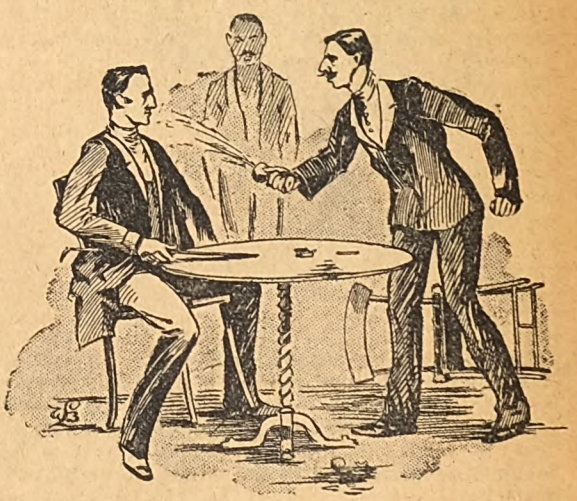
"Dear madame," said the doctor, "dismiss all such thoughts. I see what you mean. You would assassinate him, and the law would have no pity on you. You would be a victim."

"Doctor," she said firmly, "he shall die!"

Madame Soleau gained strength slowly. She would go away for a change, she said, and one day she set out for Paris. Dr. Leres was glad, feeling certain that she had forgotten her vow.

One evening, seven months later, just after another scandalous "affair" of De Magny's, a handsome and unknown young gentleman entered the Palais Café at Lyons. The newcomer, who, to judge by his tone, was a mere boy, walked with much swagger, talked loudly and authoritatively, and altogether conducted himself with aristocratic insolence.

A little later De Magny entered with three of his particular friends. The stranger favoured them with a rude stare that did not pass unnoticed. In a few minutes he got up to go. He went a little out of his way to pass near where the four were sitting, and when close to De Magny he stumbled, or pretended to



Throwing its contents in his face.

stumble—none of the onlookers doubted for a moment that it was intentional—and lurched against him as he was raising a glass of wine to his lips. The consequence was that the liquid was spilt on the duellist's immaculate shirt and silken waistcoat. He turned round as if he had been stung.

"Monsieur!" he cried to the young fellow, who stood with an innocently proud smile on his features.

"Monsieur!" said the Unknown.

"Monsieur!" said De Magny more furious than his friends had ever seen him. "You will apologise for your rudeness or clumsiness, which ever it be."

"Monsieur! I never apologise for accidents!"

There was the stillness of death in the café. It was evident that the reckless stranger knew not the fearsome reputation of De Magny.

"Monsieur, you will apologise, or——"

"Monsieur, I never apologise——"

"Nor do I apologise for that!" cried De Magny, in a tempest of rage, as he picked up a friend's glass and flung its contents in his opponent's face.

The youngster calmly wiped his face. "Monsieur

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has wantonly insulted me," he said. "I shall demand satisfaction."

"Willingly," said De Magny with his terrible, icy smile. "I shall kill you, puppy."

"Perhaps, pig," retorted the other calmly, and then, turning to the spectators, he asked in a clear voice: "Are there any gentlemen here who will act for a stranger of good birth who has no friends at hand?"

There was a little hesitation, then two gentlemen, one a notary, the other a silk merchant, signified that they would.

"Thank you, gentlemen. Shall we confer outside?" said the young fellow, who led the way.

"My dear sir," said the notary with agitation, "I warn you, you will be killed," and in trembling accents he told of De Magny's reputation and many villainies.

The Unknown heard him with a smile. "Thank you," he said. "I have heard of him, and that is why I came here. Before this time to-morrow you will be well rid of him. For I shall kill him, gentlemen; the good God shall aid me. I am the insulted party, and select pistols. Arrange it as you will; I can trust you without reserve. You will find me at the café opposite. And allow me to express the deepest gratitude for your kindness."

Again they tried to explain, but the Unknown would not listen, and with heavy hearts they went to confer with De Magny's seconds. In half-an-hour they were back. It was to be a duel with pistols at ten paces in the garden behind the Palais; the time, midnight. The seconds were to toss for the first shot.

"Thank you, gentlemen, you have done me great service. And now, if you please, we will have supper."

* * * * *

Just before midnight they walked across to the Palais, and were admitted through a private entrance into the garden, where presently De Magny, his seconds, and Dr. Leres were awaiting them. Dr. Leres had been obtained by the notary on the suggestion of the Unknown.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and the respective seconds threw the dice for the right of first fire. De Magny's second threw a three, the stranger's five.

"You have the right to fire first, M. Inconnu," said the notary.

A smile of satisfaction overspread his features. "Ah, I knew it!" he cried, in a tone of absolute conviction. "It is the finger of God."

The five spectators looked at De Magny. For the first time, it is said, a look of anxiety, even of fear, was observed on his features. He was tinged with superstition, and the Unknown's confidence had shaken his nerve, and in vain did he try to appear unconcerned.

They had been placed opposite to each other, when the Unknown said to the notary: "Monsieur, fire off my pistol, if you please, and load afresh. There must be no mishaps."

A protest was raised by De Magny's seconds that it was irregular, but the Unknown insisted, and after some argument and appeals to the law and etiquette of duelling, both pistols were fired off. Strange to say, when the trigger was pulled the pistol of M. Inconnu missed fire, and a fresh cap had to be placed on it before it was discharged.

"You see," said he, "there would have been a mishap, and God's purposes would have been frustrated."

Once more the pistols were loaded, and again the duellists took their places. The incident had further affected the bravo, and his face was ghastly.

"Inconnu, fire!"

The Unknown slowly raised his pistol until it was pointed at De Magny's heart. He held it there for a quarter of a minute, his arm as rigid as a bar of steel, then he lowered it again.

"Monsieur," he said slowly and coldly to his antagonist, "God has made me His minister to end your crimes. But I fire especially to avenge Dr. Soleau, whom you wantonly assassinated."

And again he raised the pistol, this time pointing it at De Magny's forehead. The latter was almost in a state of collapse, and as the Unknown pulled the trigger, contrary to the regulations that had been made, he lifted his pistol and fired. It was almost a simultaneous report. De Magny's ball passed through the left arm of the Unknown, breaking the bone, but at the same instant he gave a leap in the air, and fell dead! The bullet had passed exactly between the eyes.

"Infamous! Infamous!" cried the notary to De Magny's seconds. "A scoundrel act!"

"What matters it?" said the Unknown solemnly, "he has been executed." And then his face turned ghastly, as if he were about to faint. In an instant Dr. Leres was at his side, ripped open the sleeve with his penknife, and began to examine the wound.

"The infernal scoundrel!" he cried.

"He has died as he has lived, Dr. Leres," said the Unknown. "Do you not know me?"

The doctor peered keenly into his face, then started back. "It—it cannot be!" he cried.

"But it is," said the Unknown. "I am Estelle Soleau, the unhappy widow of that scoundrel's victim. I have kept my oath. But it will not bring Ernest back," and she fainted.

* * * * *

There was much incredible news for the city next morning that many would not believe until the seconds had been interviewed, and then the rejoicing was great. Mme. Soleau's act touched the popular imagination, and the bulletins as to her condition were scanned as eagerly as if they concerned the health of a crowned head.

It was a dangerous wound, and it was only after weeks of anxiety that all danger was pronounced at an end.

A fortnight later she took the veil, not to live in seclusion, but to devote herself to the poor and needy in the slums of Paris.

J. HARTLAND.

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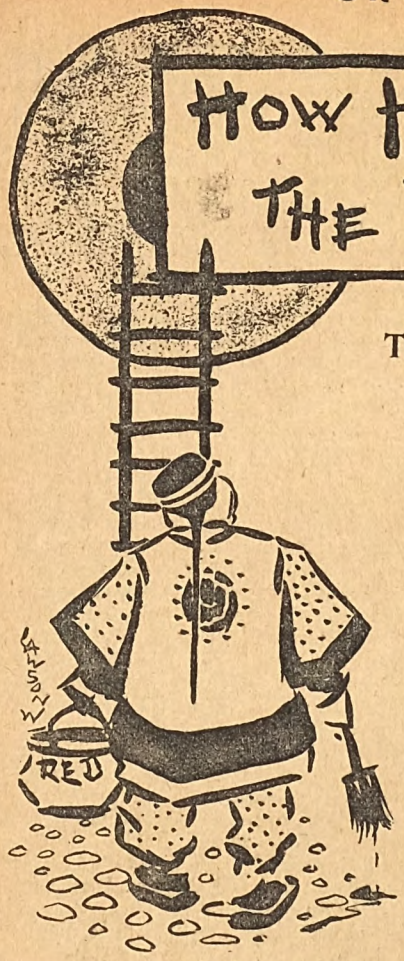

How Hwang Tak taught the Emperor's Mule to Speak.

Told by Che Fu, at the Club of the Green Tea Merchants, Shanghai.

Nothing was certain but confusion. The Palace was in commotion. The Cook was in disgrace; the Court Juggler was in prison. Consternation had seized upon the Harem.

A most untoward event had befallen.

Light of the Eyes, the favourite son of the great Emperor, Qwong See—the only child of his beloved Narcissus, the Golden Lily of China—would not eat his breakfast. The Imperial kitchen had been ransacked in cupboard and corner. Its choicest delicacies had been set before him in vain. With an imperious gesture of his arm he had motioned them away.

Jellied bird's nest and sharks' fins *à la Hong Kew* he refused even to look at. Candied sucking pig, a dish prepared by the *chef's* own hands for the Emperor's own table, the young gentleman had only toyed with, finally sending away the *bonne bouche* untasted.

The kitchen was in despair. The cook saw nothing for it but to resign while he had the opportunity.

The Harem was in tears. The ladies had used every art, had employed every artifice, and were at the end of their resources. Light of the Eyes had repulsed their best efforts with a vigour that was really alarming. Daffodil and Violet had besought him on their knees, Tea Rose and Crimson Clove had dipped their dainty hands in the dish, and would have fed him with their own delicate fingers. Cherry Blossom had sung to him, and Peach Bloom had played.

Alas and alack! it was labour that profited not.

Light of the Eyes fretted and fumed, pouted and pished, hid his pretty face behind his fan, wound his small pigtail round his forehead, shook his shoulders and kicked the slippers off his feet. He wished the ladies to understand that their attentions were not agreeable to him.

The situation was rapidly becoming acute. Evidently a crisis was impending. That a son of the Heavens should refuse to eat his breakfast was a thing the like of which had never before been heard of by the oldest inmate of the Harem.

For six years Light of the Eyes had eaten his breakfast without a murmur—"with relish and regularity," to quote from the official report submitted each day to his Imperial father. Why, then, should he refuse it now?

"Clearly," said Green Jade, "there must be a demon at the bottom of it. The spirits of the Evil One have arrayed themselves against the House of the Emperor. Send for the Venerable—send for Honan, the High Priest of Buddha."

Now, Green Jade was, by virtue of her age, the mother of the maids; and her advice was listened to with eager attention.

"Honan," declared Green Jade, "is the only person likely to be of any use where demons are concerned."

So Honan came, together with Li Chun, his assistant, a good-looking young priest who, under sunnier circumstances, would probably have created a warm interest in some one or two of the half-dozen susceptible feminine breasts which now beat with an overpowering anxiety on behalf of the youthful heir to the "Celestial" Kingdom.

Squatting down upon the floor, Honan lit his joss sticks and began to recite the "office" for the exorcising of demons, while Li Chun beat the tom-tom to call Buddha's attention to the fact that his servant Honan was in petition for the son of the great Emperor Qwong See.

Honan finished his prayers, invoked the five blessings in which are summed up all the elements of human felicity—health, riches, longevity, love of virtue, and a natural death; and, to insure a perfect and lasting cure, proceeded to drive out any obstinate demon that might be hanging behind, by firing the crackers which Li Chun had arranged upon the temporary altar.

But Light of the Eyes, who had watched the performance intently from the beginning, began to manifest his displeasure so persistently and emphatically, as the

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exploding crackers showed the smiling Buddha in a blaze of light, that Honan, gathering his skirts about him, declared that it was a case not provided for in the Books, and advised that the Court physicians be sent for.

Instantly messengers were dispatched to summon the best medical skill which the chief city in the Empire could afford—for time was pressing.

Every day it was the habit of the Emperor Qwong See to pay a visit to the Harem to hear his favourite son repeat the Seven Wise Maxims or read a passage from the Book of Rites.

The approach of the hour for the daily visit filled the ladies with alarm. If the Emperor should happen to discover that Light of the Eyes had refused to eat his breakfast, the consequences would be past all imagining.

Haste, post haste, therefore, was urged upon the doctors.

Presently the men of drugs began to arrive. They came in ones and twos and threes—men whose appearance answered for their wisdom; books under their arms, glasses astride their noses. Ushered with becoming

The men of drugs began to arrive.

gravity into the young prince's apartment, they were evidently much impressed by the serious aspect of the case, and the more especially since the Emperor might now be expected at any moment.

Light of the Eyes regarded them at first with a stony stare, and then with a disapprobation which left no room for doubt. When they sought to approach him he made to clear the table, threw his fan at the wall, hid his face in his blouse; and, finally, turning his back, declared in unmistakable fashion his profound contempt for the entire faculty.

Distressed at these ominous symptoms, the good men nodded their heads sagely, and, consulting together, agreed that the Books of Medicine contained no prescription to meet a case such as this. But, just at that identical moment, trumpets sounded without, there was a commotion in the corridor; and, whilst the doctors were yet debating, the doors were thrown open, and, attended by all the great officers of State, the Emperor strode into the room.

The news which had got all over the Palace that Light of the Eyes would not eat his breakfast, had brought the Emperor to the Harem ten minutes earlier than usual.

Everybody waited breathless, anxiety and expectation in each countenance, till the Emperor should speak. What would he say? What would he do?

Green Jade had handed him a full report of the case up to the moment of sending for the Court physicians. The doctors, who scanned the Imperial features with careful scrutiny, the while Qwong See the Great perused the fateful document, stood in a small knot at a respectful distance waiting till their master should signify his good pleasure. Presently, sending his glance in their direction:

"Speak," he commanded in a voice that might have froze the marrow in the bones of an ostrich. "Speak, and under pain of instant death — no, by the pigtail of Confucius it shall be death by slow slicing. See to it then, physicians all, that ye attempt not to deceive me; for, by the eyebrows of Buddha, that moment will find you booked for a visit to the Yellow Springs* at the expense of the Public Treasury.

"Say on now, and tell if aught in your books can teach how to cast out the demon which torments my son; and in doing so, avert the calamity which threatens our dominions, when a son of Heaven refuses to eat his breakfast."

The doctors, laying their hands upon their breasts, salaamed profoundly.

"Prince Light of the Eyes," continued the Emperor, "has refused to eat his breakfast."

Then the doctors, bowing more humbly than before, made answer and said:

"May it please your High Mightiness, our miserable bodies are at your Majesty's disposal, our worthless heads are laid at your Majesty's feet. The case of Prince Light of the Eyes has received our most serious consideration; and, in our unworthy opinion, there is but one man in your Imperial Dominions who is equal to undertake it. He alone may hope successfully to

* The Nether Regions.

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expel the evil spirit which has dared to lay its wretched hand upon a son of the Heavens—he alone, most Mighty One, can restore cheerfulness to the Prince, peace to the palace, happiness to your Majesty, and prosperity to all who have the felicity to dwell under the shadow of your protecting arm."

"His name?" demanded the Emperor in a tone of thunder.

"Hwang Tak," cried the doctors in chorus, but their voices were thin and feeble, and made scarcely more sound than the scratching of a mouse.

The Emperor's eyes blazed as if a furnace burnt behind them.

"Hwang Tak," piped the doctors a little louder;

Whispered many words in the ear of Hwang Tak.

"Hwang Tak, the court juggler," and, growing bolder on finding their heads still upon their shoulders, they continued: "Light of the Eyes must be diverted in divers and strange manners till the devil which has entered into his Highness be driven out of him. Tak is the man, your Majesty."

"Let Hwang Tak be brought hither immediately," said the Emperor, turning to the Captain of the Gate. "Return without him, and ——" If the Captain had possessed the wings of the flamingo he could not have sped quicker.

"Hwang Tak," said the Emperor, addressing the juggler, "a calamity is impending over the Palace. A blow is being struck at the foundations of the Empire. My son, Prince Light of the Eyes, has refused to eat his breakfast; and till the Evil Spirit passes, the business of the State waits. The learned Faculty of Medicine inform me that the Chinese Pharmacopœia does not provide for the expelling of foreign devils, which can only be driven out effectually by a professed follower of the Black Art. I look to you, therefore, to remove this affliction from the Prince, my son, and receive the hearty thanks of a grateful Empire. Proceed."

"But——"

"But me no buts. Proceed!"

"Lord of the Heavens and the Earth——"

"Proceed, proceed!"

"Your Mightiness will at least allow——"

"Nothing—nothing! Time pauses in his onward flight till Light of the Eyes shall have eaten his breakfast."

The juggler touched his forehead in token of humility, and bowing himself down to the ground, answered:

"My mean, contemptible head is placed in your August Majesty's all-powerful hands."

"Away with him," cried the Emperor in anger. "Away with the impostor! If in three days he has not promised obedience to our wishes, his name shall be marked with the vermilion pencil."*

So they took Hwang Tak and cast him into prison. But the juggler was a wily fellow, and forthwith fell to weaving spells and practising incantations to such good purpose that next morning the evil spirit had departed from Prince Light of the Eyes, who ate his breakfast as usual.

Then the Emperor, commanding Hwang Tak to be brought before him, rated him severely for his folly in persisting to defy the Imperial will, concluding with these words:

"While acknowledging the result of the efforts made by you after committal, I cannot allow such an act of gross disrespect to our Imperial dignity to go unpunished; but, that none may say of Qwong See that he did not know how to temper mercy with justice, I now offer you a free pardon and full restoration to former honours, on one condition."

"My lord, your humble servant bows his worthless head."

"The only condition I make is, that you teach my mule to speak."

Hwang Tak lifted his eyes. "Your servant accepts, my lord," he murmured, "but prays you will remember that of all beasts the mule is the most obstinate; and, therefore, would crave of thee a boon. Grant him, O Gracious One, twelve moons in which to bend the stubborn creature to his will, and the thing which thou desirest shall be done."

"'Tis not unreasonable," said the Emperor. "The boon is granted."

Then Hwang Tak got upon his feet and went away.

Now Hwang Tak's mother, who lived only a day's journey from Pekin, was a wise woman; and no sooner was Hwang Tak outside the Palace than he set off to consult with her on the business in hand.

"You did well, my son," said she, "to gain time. With time and faith one can do all things. Time was at work, with patient fingers unloosening the knot while you lay in prison; and behold, in the morning the black fit had passed; but the credit of it went to you. So now, my son, in twelve moons many things may happen—the Emperor may be gathered to his fathers,

* Marked for execution.

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the mule may die; you, my son, may be taken hence, or—the mule may be taught to speak."

Then the old woman leant over, and whispered many words in the ear of Hwang Tak, who rubbed his hands, cracked his fingers, and laughed softly to himself. Every month regularly until the year had run round, Hwang Tak paid a visit to the wise woman, his mother, and every month the juggler grew more jocund in spirit and joyous in manner. His nights were spent in the Emperor's stables teaching the Emperor's mule to speak.

At length, the last day of the moon in the twelfth month having arrived, the Emperor and his Court was assembled, all anxious to hear what the mule would say. At his father's feet, smiling and happy, sat Prince Light of the Eyes, who delighted in the miracles which were wrought by Hwang Tak for his instruction and amusement.

Suddenly the great gong at the water pagoda sounded, the mule was led forth, the attendants were bidden to stand aside, and Hwang Tak was left in sole charge of his pupil. Then the Emperor, making a sign with the golden wand which he carried, the juggler stretched forth his hand, and with a loud voice cried:

"Now, oh, Stubborn-of-heart, is the time come that ye know of. Speak, therefore, and tell his High Mightiness, Qwong See, Lord of Heaven and Earth, all that you have seen and heard in the Imperial stables whilst the little white rabbit in the moon has been pounding rice for the year."

And lo, before those present had recovered from their surprise at hearing a mule speak, the sagacious animal was relating how the Master of the Horse sold the foals and put the money in his pocket; how the forage contractor supplied bad feed which the storekeeper passed in—for a consideration; how the stablemen stole the corn out of the bins and neglected to groom the animals in the stalls; how the litter was seldom changed, though it was always charged for; how the harness-maker cheated the clerk, and the clerk imposed on the steward, and the steward deceived the controller, and the whole gang were in league to defraud the Emperor.

What further the mule would have said was cut short by Qwong See rising in his place and commanding him to stop. "Stop!" he cried, "before faith be utterly destroyed, and we are left without remedy! Stop, while the power to believe in word or oath remains still within possibility! Stop, lest a worse thing be spoken; for, though he search diligently, a faithful man, who can find?"

Then turning upon his household, "Out of the mouth of a beast of the stall," said he, "an Emperor and his Court have been put to shame—the master for his servants, the servants for each other. Dumb dogs are ye all," he continued, withering them with scorn, "in the presence of this mule. Dumb dogs, and craven. But I shall know how to deal with you."

How the delinquents were dealt with may be inferred from the fact that there were a large number of vacancies in the Palace on the day after the Great Function, which henceforward was known in all Pekin as the Day of the Mule.

Hwang Tak, loaded with favours, was re-named the Wonder Worker, and might have aspired to a seat on the Council; but, by advice of his mother, he remained simply Court Juggler to the Emperor. Qwong See the Great, like a wise and prudent man, never tried to peep behind the veil, or to look farther than he could see; and so, to this day, no man in the Eighteen Provinces knoweth how Hwang Tak taught the Emperor's mule to speak.

H. HUNTER.

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AT THE END OF THE LARIAT.

WHEN James Sorten came to the Cimmarron ranche and introduced himself as the younger son of a wealthy Englishman who came out for sport, he was believed. His admirable form, and his charming manners, won the hearts of the men—and women—of the settlements, and made him the friend of the ranche boys wherever he met them.

Rivalries that are now turned towards the manipulating of the prices of stock were then in that section devoted to the handling of herds, and the ranche that had the largest and most energetic force of cowboys, was the one that had the better fortune in that line.

Sorten, who soon gained the title of "Yellowback," because of his customary clothes of bright saffron, became the leader of the rustlers. He could scent a maverick farther than anyone along the trail, and woe to the herder that allowed a drove to remain out on the prairie over night—it was likely to be missing for good.

Sorten went to the trail every night, and often returned with two or three that had strayed from some passing herd. One night he did not return as soon as usual, and when he came in, it was with a white face and agitation written all over him.

"Seen a ghost?" asked the chief herder.

"No, but I tell you, boys," were his words, "I've seen the fastest rider that ever was in this valley."

"Tell us about it."

"There ain't nothin' to tell," said Sorten, who had lapsed into the rough talk of the boys. "I was over in the upper ravine looking fer any a-wanderin' steers that might be needin' care an' had found two, when along come a stranger on horseback and ordered me to git. I don't take any man's sass, and I told him so. What did that critter do but give a whoop an' scare them steers so that they went bellowin' down the ravine. I follered of course, an' when I saw that there wasn't any chance to get them home, turned round to look at the other one. He sat on his hoss as quiet as you please, an' when I looked at him, smiled, then, with another whoop, started after the steers himself, an' what do you think? In a minute he had 'em on his line an' was drivin' 'em home—which I take it is over the other side of the trail."

It appeared afterwards that he had tried to overtake the stranger, but failed—hence his perturbation.

About a week afterwards a day off was given to the cowboys, and we all went up to the town for a time. When we came within a mile of the settlement, Jim caught sight of a sorrel horse ahead of us, and he gave a little cry of joy and sank the spurs into the flanks of his pony. He had recognised the horse as that ridden by the mysterious herder. We followed, and were by his side when the sorrel was overtaken. Then we noticed something that we had not been aware of before—the rider of the sorrel was a woman.

Jim's face was a study. He was so sure of his game, and when it came as it did he wilted. But he braced up a little and began a conversation. It was the daughter of the chief herder across the river, and she was about as pretty a picture as often came to the eyes of the herders in the territory. She laughed and joked with Jim, and he deserted us to be by her side. We rode on and left them together.

That was the beginning, and for about a month Jim and his girl were the talk of the country round. They were smitten with each other if any two ever were, and rode up and down the ranges like wandering twin spirits.

Jim was scared on the range again, and this time he swore that the visitor had made him give up ten head of the finest calves that he had ever laid eyes on. But none of us saw the stranger, and the opinion of the ranche was that Jim had had too much that night.

One day the order came to go to the south-west after a herd and drive it north. It meant two months of hard riding, and how Jim did hate it!

He rode over to see his girl, and they had an affecting parting.

That was the year of the cattle suffering on the plains because of the rain and sleet. In the territory there was not so much suffering, but the cold wind made it hard for the cowboys, and they had the toughest time they had ever seen to keep warm while on the range.

One night, as the storm was at its worst, there came along the trail a little herd that had evidently been herded through the summer on their way north.

In the camp waggon that was with them was a woman. She came to the ranche house to get some food, and we kept her there all night, the cook's wife sharing a bed with her. The girl—for she was not more than a child—asked if we knew a James Morris. Of course we did not, but when the next morning she took from her neck a locket, and opening it, showed us the face of "Yellowback," we all looked blank enough, I tell you.

She went back to the waggon, but they did not get any farther. The man fell ill somehow, and the woman went to the other ranche, where she met Jeanne Arsey, the girl that had the love of Jim—or thought she had.

Well, the expected happened. She told her troubles to Jeanne, and the girl knew that she had been making

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love to a married man. Mad? There is no word to express it. She vowed that she would kill him, and then was willing to forgive for the wife's sake. But Jim did not come then.

The wife stayed and grew ill faster than her father. At last she died and Jeanne was free. But those who knew were glad they had not the task that was before Jim when he came home.

At last the herd was within a day's drive. The boys all knew the situation between Jim and Jeanne and wanted to see what would happen.

Jim was tired when he came into camp, and did not want to talk. When he had eaten his dinner he proposed going to the town, and half-a-dozen of us went with him. On the way he asked if we had seen Jeanne. We told him nothing about the visitor.

Jim drank harder than I had ever seen him do that afternoon, and at four o'clock was in a lively mood, ready for any sort of an escapade. As we rode down the little street we saw coming in from the ranches a woman on horseback. All the herders fell back. They did not want to see what happened at too short range.

"How are ye?" called Jim so that we could all hear.

There was no answer.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Don't you want to marry me?"

For an answer she gave her horse a blow with the riding whip and came up to his side. In her hand was the raw-hide. She lifted it high, and before he could see what she was going to do it came down across his face again and again. He fairly howled with pain, but she rode back to her side of the street and kept up the highway.

"I'll kill her," shouted Jim, and away went his horse to the saloon where he had left his revolver.

As he stood before the bar trying to get the barkeeper to give it up she rode in front of the house.

"Jim Morris," she called, "come out here." How white Jim turned. But he went.

"You cowardly sneak," she began. "I thought I loved you once, but now I know you. Do you remember those nights that I used to scare you away from the mavericks?"

Jim looked at her in astonishment. Had he been outwitted by a woman?

"And last month I held in my arms a woman who had this picture. Do you know it?"

She held out the miniature that was in the possession of the woman with the herd. Jim shuddered.

"Where—where did you get it?" he asked.

"From your dead wife's hands. She believed in you, and I did not tell her better. She died blessing you, and do you know where you ought to be?"

The woman's eyes fairly blazed as she sat there on her horse, and faced the little company of herders and saloon frequenters.

Jim never said a word. He quailed before the angry woman, but he was too angry himself to give up.

"You said a little while ago that you would kill me," she began once more. "Get on that horse, and let's see about it."

A pony was standing near—Jim's. On it's back the men placed him, wondering what would be the next move, but all hoping that the vengeance would fit the crime.

"I'll count three," said Jeanne; "then look out."

"One——"

Jim was unarmed—what else could he do? He jabbed the spurs into the pony, and was off like a shot. Up the long street he went, and had 300 feet the start when came "Three!"

Then we knew why the sorrel had rounded up the mavericks. It ran like the wind. At the sound of its mistress' voice it was off, and the distance between the two lessened. Out on the prairie they sped. Then came the end.

When within a short distance of the fleeing man, the woman drew a coiled lariat from her saddle and whirled it around her head.

Once, twice it circled, and then—away in beautiful curves until it settled over the head of the coward and deceiver, Jim.

Her sorrel planted its feet in the sod; there was a jerk, a fall, and then away over the plain towards the ravine, where was the little cemetery, she went, a dark object dragging at the end of the rope. They disappeared behind the hills, and she did not come back.

Indeed, she never came to the settlement again, for she moved from the trail country a few weeks after.

G. PANTHEON.

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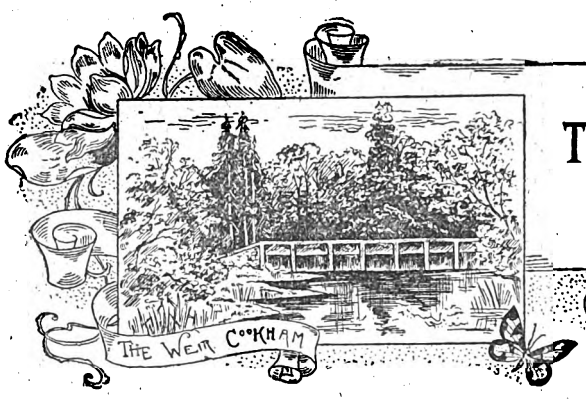

THE MAN WITH THE BOX.

On a certain quiet corner, one Cahill keeps a cosy snuggery to which I am partial—especially when returning from an up-country outing. One sultry evening in July, I arrived at his place at the hour of ten p.m. somewhat tired out, for I had passed a busy day on my wheel, over a country road since dawn, making kodak notes of certain views I needed for future reference. Entering my favourite restaurant, I gave a generous order, and devoted myself to the matter of refreshment. Supper over, I ordered another bottle of the beer I had been drinking with my lunch, and lighting a cigar, sat at a luxurious ease, too tired even to glance over the evening paper that lay on my table.

As I sat drowsily smoking, my attention was attracted by the noise of a moving chair in my rear. I turned somewhat suddenly, to find, sitting at the table behind me, a peculiar-looking person. He was possessed of a long, narrow face, that was half buried in a heavy, iron-grey beard of extraordinary length. His eyebrows, of the same colour as his beard, were bushy and bristling, and meeting in the centre of the line of his nose, gave to his face an air of concentrated purpose, borne out by a pair of keen, glittering eyes, that peered sharply from beneath them.

"Kodakist?" queried he, with a brusque, familiar air of one who eschewed conventionalities, as he caught my eye.

"I am an artist!" I replied stiffly. His undue familiarity annoyed me.

"Ah, indeed? A distinction without much difference, in my mind; they're essentially quite the same——"

"Not at all the same!" I rejoined, ruffling.

"Pardon me—no doubt you think so; but after all, it's a mere matter of one's point of view. Did it ever strike you, when thinking of these matters, how few are the primal principles on which are based the innumerable inventions of modern times?"

"Can't say I've thought much about it?" I tartly replied, sipping my beer and wondering how to rid myself of this preposterous bore.

"For instance, as an artist, you are very likely aware of the recent successful experiments in photographing colour?"

I nodded in cold affirmation.

"Then you are probably aware it is generally admitted that the differentiation of one colour from another to the eye is occasioned simply by the fact that each colour imparts a different number of vibrations to the second of the ray of light it reflects to the optic nerve?"

I admitted a knowledge of this theory.

"Very well; you are possibly also aware that the difference between one tone and another in musical sounds lies merely in the different number of air vibrations to the second produced by each respective sound?"

I intimated that I was also aware of this fact.

"Very well; here we have two quite diverse channels through which the principle of the sensibility of the nervous system to vibratory impressions operates."

"Well, what of it?" I asked impatiently, as he paused and sat regarding me with his bright, glittering eyes.

"Simply this: Why should not the sense of taste be referred to in this same principle?"

He arose as he spoke, and drew from under his table a small box. Bringing it over, he placed it carefully on my table, after which, without apology, he removed my kodak from where it lay near my elbow, to the floor beneath, and seated himself, unasked, opposite me. The box was of cubical shape, made of some fine, richly grained wood, and polished till it shone like the cherry-topped table at which we were sitting. Pivoted on the top of it was an arrow-headed index hand, made of brass and about four inches in length. The side of the box facing me was studded with a row of brass push-buttons.

"Kodakist?" queried I, ironically, returning his first question.

"No, my dear sir, I am not; neither am I a confidence man; nor am I, as your manner might seem to imply, a 'crank.' But," said he, suddenly leaning forward and tapping himself briskly on the forehead, "I do confess to a degree of enthusiasm over a certain discovery of mine—an enthusiasm you will presently share if you will give me a few moments of your leisure."

My distaste for the fellow was not lessening; but his speech was civil in its way, and his brusque, eccentric ways amused me. I wrote occasionally for the press. Here was a character, and I resolved to study him a bit. I rapped for the waiter.

"Excuse me, sir," said my peculiar companion, as the knight of the apron appeared; "it is my privilege first, I believe, under the circumstances. Waiter!" he added, tossing a silver dollar down on the table, "two glasses of water, please."

That functionary stared.

"Sir?" quoth he, with mouth open.

"Two glasses of water, please, and there's something for your trouble."

The sight of the money seemed to restore the waiter's equilibrium, for, picking it up, he felt it, put it in his pocket, and retired with chin elevated! In a moment he reappeared with two glasses of water, deposited them

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on the table, winked at me, and again retired with chin still elevated.

"Rather mild potation you've ordered," I observed, with a quizzical glance at my eccentric companion.

"The water?" said he somewhat absently, as he blew the dust from the throat of a small key; "oh, that's all right; you shall drink your favourite beverage presently."

Carefully fitting the key into some aperture in the side of the box facing him he turned it a little, as if to try the wards; then, pushing the box aside, he suddenly leant forward, fixed on me his peculiar eye, and abruptly asked:

"Are you not possessed of a somewhat vivid imagination?"

I acknowledged to being endowed with a fair share of that faculty.

"Do you not write for the press occasionally?"

I admitted that I was something of a scribe.

"So I thought, so I thought," said he, tapping the box thoughtfully; "an artist—a man of letters—a person of imagination. Just the person I seek. But talking is dry work, particularly to a listener. Let us first drink," continued he, pushing one of the glasses of water towards me.

"Oh, really, you must excuse me," I demurred, with a furtive eye on the box, which I began to distrust, "water after beer—I couldn't you know—and——"

"Oh, bother the water," he impatiently interrupted, suddenly turning the box round and pushing it over to me.

In the side of the box that had been facing him, was a large glass-covered dial, round the margin of which was printed in small characters a number of words, radiating in the alignment of their letters from the centre. In this central point of the dial was pivoted an index hand, the finger of which at present rested on a blank space which broke the circle of printed words. I bent closer to examine these characters. To my surprise, I found they constituted a remarkably complete list of the most popular of the beverages known to the bibulous world. The more noted brands of ale, beer, brandy, whisky, rum, and gin appeared, together with many of the most celebrated vintages of wines. There was also listed a number of fancy drinks so dear to the British heart. The milder beverages found place, too—both hot and cold—even water being included. Beneath the dial was inserted, in a small hole, the key the man had just been manipulating.

I looked up inquiringly. "Name your beverage," said he.

"If you mean that I am to name a favourite beverage from that list, why, I should say Bass's ale," I replied, somewhat puzzled.

"Very well," said he; "kindly turn that key till you see that the indicator above points to the words 'Bass's ale.'"

I complied.

"Take up your glass!"

I obeyed.

Swiftly drawing the box to him, he turned the brass arrow on its top till it pointed at me, and then pressed one of the push-buttons.

"Look at your glass!"

I turned my gaze from the box to the glass that I held in my hand. To my amazement, instead of water, there shimmered in it, with an oily bead, an amber-hued beverage, most uncommonly like in appearance the ale I had just been drinking.

"Taste it," said my strange acquaintance.

I tasted it—though somewhat gingerly.

"Bass's ale!" I exclaimed, astounded.

"Yes," he observed, with an air of satisfaction, "and, as you'll find, a particularly fine brew."

Curious to investigate this novel trick, I took a few moderate sips of the stuff. The fellow was right. I am somewhat of a connoisseur of fine ales, and I found this one excellent.

"A capital trick! I perceive you to be a master of the art," I observed smilingly.

"A paltry dabbler in legerdemain?" he exclaimed with irritation. "I had attributed to you a finer perception than this. I am aware that in person and manner I may seem eccentric, but, believe me these appearances are not the fruit of an ill-balanced head or an evil heart. They are the ugly crusts, so to speak, begotten of bitter experiences and deferred hopes."

He sat silently regarding me for a moment, and then continued:

"Sir, I have a brief story to tell, and a proposition to make to you. Whether or not you accept the latter, you are confessedly a knight of the pen, and may find some use to make of the former; will you listen?"

The fellow really was getting interesting. I nodded my willingness to hear him.

"I am," he continued, "by profession a model maker. I was brought up to the business, and, having a natural aptitude for the work, came to be counted among the best in my line. Having an original turn of mind, together with a natural facility of execution, I made a specialty of developing the crude ideas of inventors who lacked the technical knowledge and practical experience necessary successfully to complete their various conceptions. Thrown thus in contact with minds groping along original lines with more or less cleverness, my own ingenuity was stimulated, and I was led, at last, into a line of original investigation and experiment that resulted in a most wonderful discovery.

"Even to outline clearly to you the nature and methods of these researches and experiments would take too much time. Suffice it to say that the flower of my discovery stands before you in that box. In that polished cube of wood is incrusted a marvellous device, equal in importance to a telephone, typewriter, phonograph, or any other of the mighty group of great modern invention.

"You look incredulous; but I assure you my words are well advised, as I shall presently demonstrate to your entire satisfaction.

"This wonderful little apparatus that stands before you, I call a Universal Beverage Differentiator. By a proper manipulation of its mechanism, in conjunction with a certain exertion of psychological power on the part of the operator, any beverage held or recently touched by a person within a radius of sixty feet of the box, and at whom this projector on top may at the time be pointed, will, to that person's sight and taste, be converted to any beverage indicated at the moment by the pointer of this dial that you see set in the side. Moreover, the impression will hold good until neutralised by the action of certain parts of the apparatus, that, when brought into play by the operator, serve to dispel the hallucination."

As the stranger paused, as if waiting for me to remark upon his strange disclosure, I took a long breath, tossed away my cigar sat upright, and, like a sensible cosmopolitan, laughingly observed, "Rats!"

The stranger frowned.

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"You choose to be facetious," he drily remarked; "I might, however, rejoin that, in this case, it seems to me that 'Snakes' answers all purposes equally as well," added he, pointing to a name on the dial.

I bent closer and examined it. Amidst the list of beverages was printed, in smaller characters than the others—as if to render it inconspicuous—the word "Snakes."

For an instant, I looked at it in stolid wonder. Then suddenly I surmised its ostensible function. Sitting back in my chair, I regarded my strange companion for a moment in silence; then, putting back my head, I exploded in a fit of laughter.

"Well," said I, as I recovered my breath, "my friend, all I've got to say is, that if you conjure up snakes as cleverly as you seem to change beverages, you hold the key to considerable sport in your hands."

"To a better purpose than that of mere sport, I should hope," he somewhat gravely replied. "But if you are as incredulous as your words would imply, it seems to me it would be but justice, at least, to give me a chance to demonstrate beyond dispute that what I have related of this box is literally true."

I intimated that I was willing, "provided," I added, with a laugh, "you don't turn on the snakes."

"You may rest assured as to that, sir. Although," he added with some gravity, "should I do so, you would find it no laughing matter.

"And now, pray mention some wine of which you are particularly fond," said he.

I named a certain sherry I had observed on the dial, and of which I am very fond. Hardly had he swept the indicator to the place, when the pale amber of the ale before me deepened to the ruddy brown of the wine I had called for.

Taking up the glass, I smelt the stuff, then tasted it. Unquestionably, so far as my physical senses evidenced, it was the brand of sherry I had named.

I set down my glass and regarded my companion with a puzzled look.

"My friend," I drily observed, "these transformations, on the face on them, appear quite marvellous; but any clever master of legerdemain will do things apparently as wonderful. I shall be glad to be convinced of the truth of your extraordinary statements; but for anything you've shown me as yet, these curious phenomena may be but an adroit piece of chemical jugglery."

The stranger listened with an impatient frown. Then his countenance cleared.

"Sir," said he, "under the circumstances, your doubts are natural. Though it is not my intention that you shall go from here to-night unconvinced, any test involving immediate publicity of my discovery would be fatal to certain cherished purposes of mine. For the present, it is imperative that the strictest secrecy be observed in this matter; and though you may wonder somewhat at my sudden confidence in a perfect stranger I am not so unsophisticated as may appear, and know, in a way that would surprise you, that my trust is not misplaced.

"Now, I would propose as a test both simple and crucial, that you operate the box yourself on the next person who may drink at one of these tables. With ordinary discretion, no suspicion need be aroused as to the source of the hallucinations, and on the success of the experiment I am willing to stake my chances of convincing you."

I bit my lips and smiled.

"Your words are more flattering than convincing," I replied, "but I've no objections to such an experiment."

"Very well," said the stranger, "and now listen," he continued, with one finger held up by way of emphasis. "I must briefly explain the method of operating the box. In the first place, it is essential that the operator should be possessed of sufficient imagination to recall at will the taste, odour, and appearance of the beverage he may desire to project into the imagination of the drinker. It is not necessary that this mental picture be powerful on the part of the operator. The faintest suggestion in his mind of the desired effects will suffice, as certain plates in the apparatus—brought respectively into play by the dial indicator—are so constructed as powerfully to develop this mental effort of the operator while what, for the sake of convenience, I will call the projection current, convey these effects through this brass arrow on top into the nervous economy of any person at whom it may be pointed, and who may be drinking any liquid within a radius of sixty feet of the box—providing, of course, the indicator in the side dial be set at the name of the imagined beverage. Now this row of push-buttons which you observe set in the side of the box regulates the strength of the hallucinations. The first one on the list gives a very powerful impression; the one next is a milder one, and so on down to the sixth and last, which gives a very faint effect.

"By the way, it is not necessary that the projector be held on the subject, once it lines up with him. It suffices simply to sweep it past him. The impression he will thus receive will remain until dispelled by the action of the neutralising mechanism, which is operated by these two large buttons set in the end of the box. When the operator desires to neutralise the effects of the apparatus on a subject, he simply lines him up again with the projector and presses the white button, or, if several persons are under influence, he may break the spell with all of them simultaneously by pressing the red button, which does not necessitate the use of the projector in conjunction with it. Thus, you see, the operation of the box is extremely simple; and I should be very glad if you would put it to any test these instructions may have suggested."

I had followed him through these details with a grave countenance. Inwardly I was convulsed with a curious mixture of wonder and mirth. If only a clever fakir, what possible lay could the fellow be on? Perhaps a matter of a desired loan on the alleged apparatus. Still, for a confidence game, the plant seemed unnecessarily elaborate. Juggling so clever as this would be a goose which would lay more golden eggs in legitimate paths than in crooked ones.

"My friend," I observed, scanning him sharply, "as I've said, your proposition of a test seems made in good faith. If sincere, you, of course, will not object to my trying these experiments without your presence, I suppose?"

To my surprise, he rose at once.

"Not at all, sir; in fact, I was about to propose such an arrangement myself," he frankly replied. "I will absent myself for an hour from these premises," added he, glancing at his watch. "That will give you time to experiment to your satisfaction. But before going, I would say that while I want you thoroughly to satisfy yourself in this mattter, you will see, I am sure, the necessity of keeping within judicious bounds. A hint to a person of your discretion should be enough."

"Oh, and one thing more; try any plate named in the list, but as you value your life, don't tamper with the 'snake' plate; remember, have nothing to do with it!"

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During the latter part of this conversation, a lull in the evening trade of the place had left us alone. At this juncture, however, a gentleman entered, bowed smilingly to me and, passing on to another table, ordered some sandwiches and a glass of milk. I knew him as a promising young physician who was strongly opposed to the use of stimulating beverages.

My companion leant over to me with twinkling eyes. "There's a subject for you," he whispered; "try him! Here comes his drink," he added, rising, "and as you seem to have understood correctly my instructions, I will now leave you to experiment to your satisfaction by yourself;" then, nodding me "good-evening," he withdrew.

I was nonplussed.

I had so far doubted the fellow's sincerity in desiring a genuine investigation of his alleged discovery; but there of course could be no possible collusion in this case.

How would he get out of it? His audacity amused me. I would humour his game till I saw its point, at least. Under cover of the evening paper, I set the indicator of the box at "milk punch." Then, waiting till my medical acquaintance reached for his glass of milk, I pushed the No. 1 button, called up the proper mental picture, and slowly lined him up with the brass projector.

It was not without an anticipatory thrill that I did this, and then I smiled at my absurd perturbation. The stranger would very likely return presently, and, alleging an improper manipulation on my part in excuse of the failure of the experiment, defer his straw test until the arrival of some confederate who would enable him to effect a "fake" demonstration for my benefit.

As these thoughts were passing through my mind, the doctor suddenly pulled out his watch.

"I declare," he called to me, "I had nearly forgotten an engagement I have for this very hour!"

Rising hurriedly, he caught up his glass and took a hasty gulp. Hardly had the beverage passed his lips ere he slammed the glass down on the table, caught himself by the throat, and snorted, coughed, and choked as if he had swallowed vitriol.

I sprang to my feet and stepped over to him.

"What's the matter, doctor?" I asked in dismay, catching him by the arm.

"Matter?" he wheezed between his snorts and expectorations; "I ordered a glass of milk, and they've sent me in milk punch! Just taste of that, sir!" said he furiously, picking up the glass and handing it to me.

I smelled it, tasted it. It was milk—and nothing but milk! Not the faintest trace of any other taste or odour.

For a moment I stood confused. Then I pulled my wits together.

"Doctor," said I, dumping the contents of the glass into a cuspidore, "I am at fault myself. I just now ordered a milk punch for the person you saw sitting at my table as you entered. He has stepped out for a moment, and the waiter has made a natural error. I must beg a thousand pardons."

The doctor—by nature a pleasant fellow—had by this time somewhat recovered. His countenance cleared, he laughed good-humouredly, and expressed regret at having shown temper over a trifle. Nodding me a pleasant good-evening, he hastily departed to his engagement.

I resumed my seat, and sat regarding the mysterious box before me with an odd mixture of feelings. My manipulation of this apparently potent apparatus had been conducted, so far, in a spirit of sceptical levity, but my last experiment had put another face on the matter. I began to feel a little nervous about making further experiments on my own responsibility.

Throwing the evening paper over the box, I sat doubtfully considering the matter, when a couple of rough-looking characters swaggered in. Taking seats at a table, they ordered some beer and sandwiches, over which they proceeded to discuss the contents of a scrap of paper which one of these had produced.

Others now began to drop in, and, shaking off my nervous doubts, I gave my attention to a judicious manipulation of the box under cover of my paper.

Up to this time, I still had been obstinately possessed of a suspicion that the effects apparently produced by this alleged apparatus—even in the doctor's case—had been but a clever piece of legerdemain. The marvellous hallucinations that invariably seemed to follow every trial I made with this mystic battery were too much for my scepticism. I found my doubts resolving into a critical enthusiasm, and I entered upon further experiments with a wondering and growing delight in the occult powers of this cube of potent mechanism. In short, without exception, they confirmed all that had been claimed for this apparatus by its inventor, and created a degree of confusion in the mind of Cahill's phlegmatic head waiter that, I think, had never been visited on that organ before.

Before long I saw that I was going too far with this sort of thing. Relighting my cigar, I leant back in my chair and awaited the stranger's return with impatience. Convinced, from what I had seen, of the veracity of his statements, I was now burning with curiosity to know the nature of the proposition he had to make me.

I had, so far, refrained from tampering with the "snake" plate. As I sat waiting, I found my thoughts persistently reverting to this forbidden fruit. The unpleasant sensation which I at first experienced upon thought of it gradually grew duller with each recurrence of the matter, and, in place of aversion, there presently arose an itching curiosity to try this plate. However, the stranger's warning was yet in my ears, and I had seen enough by this time to convince me that he was sincere and knew whereof he spoke.

And yet, was not there the mild button? I had tried the brandy plate on myself with this button set, and found it reduced the hallucination to a mere shadow of effects. I would try the forbidden plate with it! On myself, of course, possible consequences forbade other experiment.

Disencumbering the box of the paper I had so far kept over it, I pushed the mild button, set the indicator at the forbidden point, and with one finger held prudently over the neutral button, slowly turned the projector till it bore full on me. Reaching out my left hand to my glass, which I had previously refilled from a fresh bottle of Bass's ale, I somewhat hesitatingly touched it. At the same time I mentally conjured up a mild type of garter snake.

As my fingers touched the glass, I was suddenly seized with a qualm of nervous apprehension; but bracing myself for a possible shock, I firmly grasped it and pulled it to me.

For a moment I observed nothing. With an odd feeling of relief I was about to re-examine the dial, thinking I had made some error, when I was startled to find my gaze irrisistibly drawn back to my glass by an overpowering fascination. The colour of its contenst

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was changing. From a pleasant amber it was rapidly passing to an ugly, venomous green; and as I looked, two bubbles of the liquid's head detached themselves from opposite sides of the glass and circled slowly to its centre, where instead of uniting, as bubbles in proximity usually do, they remained a little apart without further tendency to rotate.

Suddenly it came to me, with a sickening sensation, that they were not bubbles, but a pair of small, glittering eyes that now seemed regarding me from the depths of the beverage. For they sank as I looked; and then—horrors!—they enlarged to two great, frightful orbs that seemed to fasten my gaze with bands of fire. Slowly they began to circle about the bottom of the glass, then faster and faster they spun, until my brain reeled and my head felt like a humming top. At last so rapidly they whirled, they seemed one bright wheel of baleful, glittering light, which, presently paling to a dull, sickly-hued ring, swung slower and slower, finally fading away in the green-hued contents of the glass.

A simple matter to describe—but I had had quite enough. My ears were ringing; an iron band seemed drawn tightly about my head; a reddish mist impigned on my eyesight, and I felt the cold perspiration running from every pore.

I was about to press the neutral button, when I started back with a suppressed cry. In place of the arrow-headed pointer on the top of the box, there twisted and squirmed a hideous green and grey adder! The shock to my nervous system was something frightful; but even in the distraction of the moment, I realised it was not so much this one apparition of an adder that unnerved me, as it was the horrible dread of what might appear next.

With a powerful effort of my will, I reached a trembling hand to the cut off button, and pressed it just in time to shut off a row of small wriggling vipers which the row of buttons on the side seemed simultaneously projecting.

"And that's the effect of that plate with but the mild button set!" I mentally ejaculated, wiping the cold perspiration from my face with my handkerchief, and glancing furtively about the room. As I did so, I caught the eyes of one of the seedy pair of roughs fixed on me with a queer, insolent look. My nerves were yet tingling from my recent experience. I felt irritable and ugly and I returned his stare with interest.

"Look at that dude over there, piping us off with his kodak," said he to his chum.

"I say," said that pers nage, turning about in his chair and holding up to me the sole of one of his big feet, "just put the machine work on that, and git the picter framed to mind me by—see?"

I knew a word to the waiter would suffice to rid me of the pair. But it suddenly occurred to me that here was an opportunity to utilise the powers of the apparatus to some purpose. I would give these fellows a lesson they'd never forget to their dying day. The indicator of the dial was still set at "snakes." I had but to press the No. 1 button and call up the proper mental picture to turn the full power of that terrible plate through the projector, which, as the box now stood, pointed at the wall on my left.

I had just attended to these preliminaries when Cahill entered and walked down to them, evidently to order them out. But I was resolved not to let them off so easily. Hastily turning the projector, I lined them up just before he reached them.

The effect was instantaneous. With a yell, they both sprang to their feet. The next instant, one fell writhing to the floor, while the other came rushing towards the swing door, his face distorted and the foam flying from his mouth. As he neared me, he suddenly threw up his hands and fell across my table, striking the box, as he fell, with such force as to send it flying under the swing door out into the bar beyond.

The next moment pandemonium reigned!

As the box went rolling along, a chorus of agonised shrieks sounded through the room.

In falling it had swept the occupants of the place with its terrible current!

Indeed, it was only by a miracle of chance that I had not been caught in its radius as the box rolled.

In an instant the room was a struggling mass of delirious humanity. Some rolled on the floor in frightful convulsions, others, in their frenzy, grappled together and tore at each other's throats like wild beasts!

I sat for a moment paralysed with horror. Then I realised that in my attempt at a joke I had brought upon at least a dozen respectable citizens delirium tremens in their most horrible forms! This brought me to my senses. The box must be recovered at all hazards and its fearful effects neutralised! I sprang to my feet and leapt through the swing door.

The box was nowhere in sight!

A waiter, white with fright, was clinging to the door-post of the street entrance, shouting for the police.

"The box! where's the box?" I cried.

"He's—he's got it, sir!" said he in a frightened stutter.

"Got it! who's got it?"

"Why, just as it rolled against the bar, in came the crank that brought it here. Grabbing it, he pressed one of the buttons, and then 'Great heavens!' he yelled. 'the fool has broken the neutraliser. I can shut off the current but not the effects!' and with that he clapped it under his coat and rushed out."

My predicament was a desperate one.

The stranger undoubtedly would seek, by flight, to evade all responsibility for the frightful consequences of my folly.

He must be found at all costs.

Appalled at the frightful position in which I had placed myself, I rushed into the street in wild pursuit. But my efforts were vain. And since then, though I have exhausted every expedient in my despairing search, not the slightest trace has been found of the mysterious inventor—"the man with the box."

GEORGE TRIPP.

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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE voyage of the *Pocahontas* from Southampton out to Barbadoes, and thence, in consequence of news of the revolution in Santo Domingo coming just in the nick of time, to her berth alongside the *Minnehaha* had been both swift and pleasant.

The Atlantic Ocean and the Carribean Sea had been on their best behaviour, and the whole run had been accomplished in under a fortnight, and the *Pocahontas* had proved herself well up to thirty-two knots, if it were really necessary, as her owner put it, to get a special sort of wriggle on her.

The party in the saloon could hardly have been more happily brought together. Muriel Tristam, though she had worn the dignity of wifehood for less than a week, was able to satisfy the conventionalities without in any way embarrassing a most promising flirtation which, thanks to the constant intimacy of steamboat life, was showing symptoms of further and favourable development between Courtland and Miss Gwynneth, even by the time the yacht got to Barbadoes.

The two most delightful conditions of human life were thus both represented under their most fascinating aspects, and a pleasant spice of uncertainty, mingled with the promise of adventure, made things generally about as enjoyable for the time being as the jealous Fates are accustomed to permit.

At Barbadoes both Courtland and Tristram gave such information as they possessed with regard to the true character of the *Minnehaha*, and the objects of her owner and his guest, to the proper authorities, and the consequence of this was that Her Majesty's cruiser *Hermoine* and the United States cruiser *New York*, which happened to be lying in the roadstead at the time, received instructions to put to sea and keep an international eye open on Señor Francisco and his formidable pleasure craft.

The English and American captains lunched on board the *Pocahontas* while the war-ships were getting ready for sea, and made an interested inspection of the cruiser-yacht and her armament. It was not strictly in accordance with the law of nations that a private yacht uncommissioned in any regular service should carry six-inch quick-firers and batteries of smaller cannon and machine guns, together with a corresponding supply of ammunition, and the two captains looked a little grave about it at first, but Courtland disposed of the scruples by saying:

"Yes, gentlemen, that is a difficulty that I have seen myself, and the way I propose to deal with it is this. You see, to begin with, I think I may say without talking too tall that this is the only craft afloat that can do anything like show speed with the *Minnehaha*. I know something about that craft, and I can tell you without the slightest desire to say anything against either of your ships, that if she wanted to run away from you you'd never see anything more than the smoke of her funnels and that not for long, and if she wanted to fight she could steam round you and knock spots off you with those dynamite guns of hers while you were trying to get near her.

"Now the *Pocahontas* is equal to her in speed and carries heavier metal. If we got one six-inch shell into her there'd be mighty little fight or run left in her, for after all she is only yacht-built, and her engines and boilers are entirely unprotected. At the same time I don't want to do anything illegal. What I propose to do is this. The *Pocahontas* flies the American flag because I'm an American, but she is British built and British registered, so I think the difficulty would be squared if you gentlemen each sent a lieutenant and a party of gunners on board, and I'll divide the guns equally among them, and if it comes to a fight I promise you that the officers shall take charge of the ship. That will make her a sort of international cruiser and we can hoist the two flags. You see it is something like the sort of naval alliance that we ought to have, and I wouldn't be sorry to see the *Pocahontas* set the example. What do you think of that, gentlemen?"

The two captains received the novel proposal in silence, looking at each other as though neither cared to speak first. At length the British captain, who was senior in service, turned to Courtland and said:

"Well, Mr. Courtland, your proposal is distinctly a novel one, and quite outside all naval precedent. At the same time I quite admit the force of what you say with regard to speed. Our very best is from nineteen to twenty knots, so we obviously have no chance against a ship that can run thirty-two, hence if Captain Rockwell agrees with me that there is no actual illegality in the plan, I think the circumstances will warrant us in putting it into execution. What do you think, Captain?"

"Just about as you do, Captain," replied the American Commander. "It seems to me a pretty clear way out of a decided difficulty, and if there is anything not quite legal about it I am quite prepared to answer to the Department for my share in it. You see there isn't a cruiser either in your navy or ours that could keep track of this

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Minnehaha for an hour, and if she got clear away there is no telling what harm she might do before she got run down at last, especially if those dynamite guns are what Mr. Courtland says they are. Why, you couldn't think of a better sort of up-to-date pirate than she'd make, and I guess it's just our duty as peace-keepers of the sea to stretch a point or two to catch her when we can."

This settled the matter, and the two captains arranged the details there and then, and the result was that when the *Pocahontas* put to sea she had received a complement of a lieutenant, a gunner, and twenty men from each warship, and exhibited the distinctly novel spectacle of the Stars and Stripes flying at the fore, and the White Ensign at the main. For the present, the British and American seamen joined the port and starboard watches respectively, as regards messing, but did no work unless they chose to; while the officers were berthed in the saloon as Courtland's guests, as it was understood the yacht was to remain entirely under his control until there was a definite prospect of fighting, when the naval officers would take charge.

The first thing that was done on the arrival of the *Pocahontas* in the Ozama river was the sending of a boat containing Lieutenant Dallas of the *Hermione* to the *Magicienne*, to report what had been done and learn what news he could, and immediately afterwards Tristam paid a visit to the *Minnehaha* to leave his card on the owner, not forgetting one of his wife's for her ladyship, as it was entirely contrary to his plan of action to do anything that might cause hostilities to break out between the two of them.

The chief officer met him very politely at the gangway and told him that only that morning the party on board the yacht had started on an expedition into the interior, that he didn't expect them back under about ten days, and that his own orders were to take a trip across to Kingston for some stores which couldn't be got in Santo Domingo and then come back for them, from which it will be gathered that the astute Yankee had already smelt danger in the arrival of the *Pocahontas* and the continued presence of the *Magicienne* off the mouth of the harbour. That night, too, as soon as it was well dark he slipped a couple of his most trusty men ashore, well provided with money and armed with a brace of six-shooters each. Their instructions were to follow up the party with all speed and at every hazard, acquaint Lorrain with the state of affairs, get his orders and bring them back before it was necessary for the *Minnehaha* to start on her ostensible voyage to Kingston.

As he had found the owner of the *Minnehaha* not at home, Tristam thought that the next important thing to do would be to go on shore and interview Don Gregorio, whom as yet he knew only by reputation. The President, who had been expecting a visitor from the *Pocahontas*, received him with the cordiality which a brief inspection of the craft and her armament through the telescope had already inspired him with, and Tristam, reckoning up the man he had to deal with, with the prompt judgment of the man who had met many different kinds of men in many different climes, saw at once that bluff was the game to play—and he played it.

"Don Francisco is a very good friend of mine, señor, as I have told you," said the President in reply to a very direct question from Tristam as to the exact relationship between them. "He came to my help with that splendid ship and those wonderful guns of his when I had been driven from my lawful position, and forced to take flight by that scoundrel Manuelo and his followers. He hoisted my flag and helped me to overcome my enemies, and in return he asked only that he should go up the Ozama and look for some fabled buried treasure that he thinks is there. That was generous, was it not?"

"Well," replied Tristam, taking his cigar out of his mouth and looking very straight at Don Gregorio, "to tell you the truth, Señor President, I think I know enough about Francisco Lorrain to say that he wouldn't be quite so generous as that without good reason. No, I don't mean to say anything rude about your friendship, which I have no doubt is as honourable and sincere as circumstances permit, only it strikes me that either he is perfectly sure that there is such a treasure as you speak of, and he knows where to find it, or he knows that it is somewhere, and he possesses the means of finding out where. How do you take my meaning?"

The question was put so very directly and carried such a peculiar emphasis, that for the moment Don Gregorio was taken fairly off his guard. He moved quickly and uneasily in his chair, his ruddy brown complexion changed visibly, and there was an uneasy look in his eyes as he replied:

"It is not quite plain. Does the señor mean that Don Francisco possesses some historical record of the treasure, whatever it may be, and that he has a plan that will guide him to it? I can only say that he did not tell me of any such thing."

"No, I don't suppose he would have done," said Tristam. "He is not that sort of man, any more than he is the sort to go on a wild goose chase into a disturbed country like this after a treasure that he'd only heard someone talk about. By-the-way, Don Gregorio," he went on, as though changing the subject, "Señor Lorrain had some friends with him on board the yacht, Sir Harley Pendril and his wife and, I believe, a boy, a sort of connection of the Pendril family whom they picked up at St. Thomas's. I was told on board the *Minnehaha* just now that the whole party had gone up country. It's rather a curious thing that they should have taken a little boy of six or seven on an expedition like that into a country which has just gone through a revolution, isn't it? I can understand Lady Pendril going with her husband, for she is just the sort of woman to do so; but the boy—surely, I should have thought they would have left him on the yacht. You tell me you saw them off; are you sure he started with them?"

While he had been speaking, Don Gregorio had been thinking, and he had come to the conclusion that Tristam not only knew a good deal more than his conversation indicated, but that all things considered, it would not do to tell him more lies than were absolutely necessary, and he therefore decided to tell him the one which seemed most likely to square with the facts. By the time Tristam had done speaking he had assumed a very creditable expression of sorrow, and he replied with appropriate tone and gesture:

"Ah, señor, it is to my greatest regret that I must say that neither the youth nor his Lordship of Pendril accompanied the expedition. Alas, it is to my sorrow that I must say that they are dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Tristam, sitting bolt upright in his seat. "Surely you can't mean that, Don Gregorio. Why, Sir Harley Pendril was in the very best of health when he left England! What did he die of?"

"He died," said the President, with an excellent imitation of sorrow in his voice, "like the poor little boy, by being struck with the splinters of a shell, when Don Francisco's ship was fighting the *Dessalines*, the gunboat which the rebels had hired from the Haytians. They would not go below. His lordship would see the fun, he said, and so a shell came from the *Dessalines* and struck one of the yacht's boats and burst and wounded them both so sorely that they died. It was very sad, but his lordship should not have remained on deck and kept the boy with him. We buried them at sea with all honour and much sorrow, so you see they could not go on the expedition because they were dead."

Tristam more than half doubted the exact truth of this story, but it left him in no doubt whatever as to the fact of Langton and the boy having been got out of the way by some means or other. At the same time, he saw that no good end could be served by showing any doubts, so he replied:

"That is news that I am very sorry indeed to hear, for not only did I know Sir Harley Pendril personally, but I

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very much regret to say his sister has come out with us, and it will be a dreadful shock to her. I am afraid, too, that some very serious trouble may possibly come out of all this. You see, this yacht of Lorrain's was bought in a British port. She left Barbadoes with British papers as an ordinary yacht—a gentleman's pleasure craft, in fact. From what you have told me, she turns up on the high seas in a totally different character—as a sort of war-ship, in short, possessed of extraordinary speed and armed with very formidable guns.

"In this capacity she joins in a quarrel with which the British Government has nothing to do, and sinks a gunboat belonging to a friendly state. Meanwhile, too, a British subject and a gentleman of very considerable social position in England is killed in a quarrel in which he cannot have had any interest. I don't know what allowance might be made for the fact that you were on board and that the yacht was flying Dominican colours at the time, but to my mind it looks precious like filibustering, which a court-martial might perhaps call piracy. At any rate, I think it is only my duty to tell you that the captain of the *Magicienne* is acquainted with most of the facts, and that a British and American cruiser have followed us from

Covered them with a brace of revolvers.

Barbadoes to watch the coast. At the very least there will have to be a strict inquiry into the matter, and I don't think the *Minnehaha* will be allowed to leave until it has been cleared up, unless she goes away to Kingston in custody of the squadron.

"I may as well say, too, at once, that Mr. Courtland's yacht, as you'll have seen, is really an armed cruiser. She can steam every inch as fast as the *Minnehaha*, and Mr. Courtland has placed her under the orders of the British and American commanders to make such use of as they think fit. Now what is your opinion of the situation, Don Gregorio?"

The President had been thinking again harder than ever, and by the time Tristam had finished he had come to the conclusion that his friend Lorrain was not likely to be much more use to him. He rose from his seat and said with as much dignity as he could assume:

"Señor Tristam, I am the lawfully constituted President of this Republic. Our ways here are not, unfortunately, as your ways in Europe are, and I saw no harm in accepting the help of Don Francisco to punish those who had rebelled against my authority and driven me from the place which was mine by right. But such explanations as your Government may ask for I will give you. Moreover, from now I am content to leave the settlement of the matter in the hands of the honourable captains of the English and American ships, and I will do everything I can to help lawful authority."

"Well," said Tristam, "we can't expect anything more than that, Don Gregorio, and I have no doubt that the commanders will be happy to meet you in every way they can. But there is just another matter, a personal one which I can hardly explain just now in full, but I may just say that I, too, have come after this treasure that Señor Lorrain has gone to look for. I have every reason to believe that it exists, and at the proper time I shall be able to satisfy you that I have a better right to be the discoverer of it than he has. Therefore I am going to ask you for permission to organise another expedition to go and look for it. If I find it I shall, of course, be prepared to pay a fair proportion into the treasury of the Government, and I am prepared to pay you £500 in gold now for what we may call the Concession of Search. What do you say to that?"

"I say only, señor," said the President with one of his blandest smiles, "that if you believe there is treasure in this country you are as much at liberty to go and search for it as Don Francisco is, and so I will accept your terms. The £500 down, and—shall we say a fifth of the treasure if it is found?"

"Yes, I don't think there is much the matter with that," replied Tristam. "We can draw up the agreement to-morrow morning, and you shall have the money the moment after it is signed. Now it is getting late, and I must be off on board."

"There has been some infernal foul play about this business," he said to himself as he walked down to the jetty wondering how he should break the news to Gwynneth. "That shell was altogether too convenient to be believed in. It seems to me about a thousand to one that poor Langton and the boy were murdered, but I don't see how to bring it home either to Lorrain or her ladyship, who, I dare say, had a hand in it, especially as regards the boy. Ah, if she only knew the truth! Anyhow, I am convinced now that they have got the Gold Magnet, and I'll hunt Lorrain down till I've got it."

"That is a very happy arrangement," Don Gregorio was saying to himself about the same time, as he was reviewing the situation with the help of a brandy-and-soda and an excellent Cubaña, "a most happy arrangement. They will go up the river. They will meet, and they will fight. It may be they will almost destroy each other, for Don Francisco is not the man to give up so precious a thing for nothing. Then it shall be my care to see that these lawless revolutionists fall on those that are left and slay them all, except the señora, for whom I will find a place of safe retirement, and then she shall tell me where I am to find this wonderful thing, this gold-finder, if I have not found it before. Yes, it is very good and very fortunately arranged. And now I will go and tell la Señora Sybil all about it."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MAGNET AT WORK.

THE two men whom the chief officer of the *Minnehaha* had despatched to warn Señor Francisco of the dangers which had so suddenly and unexpectedly accumulated in the Bay of Santo Domingo, had been given very clearly to understand that the success or failure of an undertaking of great importance to their employer depended on the rapidity with which they moved, had decided that nothing in the ordinary course of human affairs was going to stop them.

As has been said, they were both well armed, and carried plenty of money to pay their way if they couldn't make it in any other fashion. They also knew enough of their new employer to feel pretty certain that every hour would be worth something to them in the way of reward.

They were landed near the Bastion San Gil without being observed, struck straight inland across the cemetery and then northward round the landward fortifications of the

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city, up to the old Well of Columbus. Near this they were fortunate enough to find a light skiff that was just floating on the incoming tide. Without a moment's hesitation one of them waded out to her, and finding that she had two oars on board, waved a white handkerchief to the other, and he promptly cast the moorings loose and joined his companion in the boat. Then they took off their stockings, muffled the oars with them, and pulled silently out into midstream.

The tide was coming up pretty strongly, and within the next hour or so they had covered a good six or seven miles of their journey in perfect silence and secrecy. Then the tide failed them, and the river got too shallow for further navigation, so they pulled the boat ashore and dragged it up into the thick scrub which crowded both banks of the river. Then, following the directions that had been given them, they struck eastward through this, and after struggling for nearly an hour with the thick undergrowth, they came out on the track, well above the mouth of the Isabella.

Then they turned their faces north-westward and set out at a rapid, swinging pace, which, with one or two brief spells, they kept up till daylight. Soon after sunrise fortune again favoured them, for they were overtaken by a couple of well-mounted gentlemen of colour, who were also making a journey into the interior. A very few words sufficed to bring about a complete understanding. Just as the travellers overtook them they separated, and from each side of the track covered them with a brace of revolvers. The coloured gentlemen understood what was meant in a moment, and promptly climbed down, and began to grovel for mercy. This facilitated matters considerably, and while one of the *Minnehaha's* men kept them in a paralysis of fear with his revolvers, the other tied them up neatly hand and foot with their own picketing ropes. They were then carried into the bush out of sight of the road, and deposited as comfortably as might be in the midst of a forsaken plantain patch, after which the two Americans got across their horses and went away up the track at a nice easy canter.

They made such good time that towards the middle of the afternoon they came in sight of the expedition, which had, of course, only been able to go at a foot pace, and another hour's hard riding brought them up with Señor Francisco and her ladyship, who were riding side by side half a mile or so ahead of the main body.

Lorrain heard the ominous tidings that they had brought in silence. Then he turned to her ladyship and said:

"This is distinctly awkward. I thought we should have had another week at least. I think I had better take Captain Peters' opinion on the subject."

"I think so, too," she replied, pulling her mule round. "It looks as if the yacht would have to run the blockade. Would it be better to give up the expedition for the present, and for all of us to get on board as soon as we can?"

"No," he said, shaking his head, "I think I must disagree with you there. That would look too suspicious, and besides, we should be almost certain to meet Tristam's party, and then there would probably be a fight, and with our base cut off we don't want anything of that sort just now. I don't mind a little gamble with Destiny, but I like the odds just a bit in my favour. Besides," he continued in a lower tone, "I don't see the fun of getting as near as we are to what we are looking for and turning back without at any rate finding just where it is. No, I think I see a good deal better way out of the difficulty than that already."

"I hope you do," she said, "for a meeting like that would be distinctly awkward just now, especially if Mrs. Tristam and my late mistress come up with the party."

"Very awkward, indeed," he said quickening his horse's pace a little, "and from more points of view than one, for if Tristam has any suspicion that we've got that thing with us he is just the sort of man to shoot on sight, and personally I should prefer to get there first."

"I most sincerely hope you will," she said with a little shudder.

"Waal, seenyor, what's the trouble? Serious news from the coast, eh? I hailed those two galoots as they passed me, but they wouldn't bring to, so I concluded that there was something serious and rode ahead a bit. Darn you for an iron-jawed grandson of Balaam's jackass, come round, and be—— I beg your ladyship's pardon, but this long-eared son of Belial won't answer the helm without a certain amount of language."

Captain Hiram Peters, who felt, as he himself put it, a good deal less at home on the hurricane-deck of a mule than he did on the navigating bridge of a steamer, had kicked his spurs into his animal's ribs as the two messengers from the yacht had passed him, and the mule had responded by breaking into a fast lope which made his seat in the saddle both undignified and precarious. Consequently he was in anything but a good temper when he hauled the hard-mouthed brute's head round alongside Lorrain's horse.

"Never mind about the language, Captain Peters," he said rather shortly. "The news is serious, and we've got to decide immediately what's to be done."

Then he told him what the news was, and Captain Peters heard it with becoming gravity, sparing one hand from the bridle to twist his beard awhile.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Lorrain, after a little pause.

"I think it is just about the meanest news I've heard since the late boss died," he said, looking down straight between his mule's ears. "It's real mean, but there is no doubt about what's got to be done first. The *Minnehaha's* got to be taken out of that bay on the shortest possible notice, if she's got to run the gauntlet of the united British and American fleets to do it."

"I quite agree with you," said Lorrain. "If we lose the yacht, we shall be in a fix that some of us won't get out of alive, and got out she must be, even if she has to fight her way out."

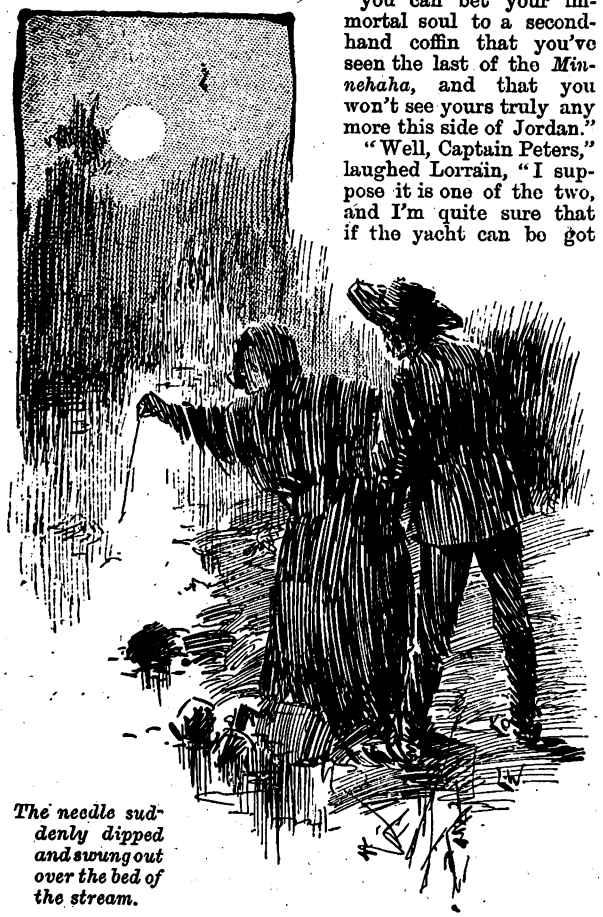
"That's so, seenyor," replied the skipper, his wicked little eyes lighting up at the very mention of a fight, "and although the First's a good man I don't like putting too much responsibility on him. He might wilt when the strain came, and I shan't, so I reckon if she's going out the man to take her out is sitting right here on this—darn you, hold still, you son of a coyote! I mean me, seenyor. You see, I've got a sort of interest in her, and though I wouldn't run her into any unnecessary dangers, I'd put her through something mighty like the ground floor of the other world before I'd let anyone else have her. Yes, sir, I would. The only trouble is what are you going to do."

"I've got it!" said Lorrain after a little pause. "Look here, Captain Peters, you are quite right about the yacht. In fact, I shouldn't feel at all easy unless I knew that you had charge of her if there is anything like blockade-running to be done. There is no disguising the fact that we are in a tight place, and we shan't get out of it without a squeeze. You take one of these men's horses and get back as fast as you can. Keep your weather eye open for Tristam's party, and avoid them whatever else you do, but get back on board the *Minnehaha* at all hazards. Then take her out to sea. Those are my orders. Get out quietly if you can. If not, fight your way out, but trust chiefly to your own speed and a dark night. If you find yourself chased when you get outside go full speed ahead to the southward, of course without lights, and as soon as you're clear double to the eastward, run round outside Saona through the Mona passage, and get round into Samana Bay, but don't get far enough in to give any chance of a blockade.

"I shall pay these niggers off at once, and send them back. We've no use for them now, and I believe every one of them is more Don Gregorio's man than mine. Then I shall get ahead as fast as possible with the others, locate what

we've come to look for, and then get down to the north coast at Savana la Mar across the Sillon de la Viuda. It's a bad road, but it's a good deal shorter to the sea that way than back to San Domingo from where we're going. When you get into the bay send the boat ashore to Savana, and let it wait for us, with directions where to find you. Now that's the best plan that I can think of. Of course, if you don't get there——"

"If I don't get there, seenyor," said the skipper, climbing with more haste than dignity down from the saddle, "you can bet your immortal soul to a second-hand coffin that you've seen the last of the *Minnehaha*, and that you won't see yours truly any more this side of Jordan."



The needle suddenly dipped and swung out over the bed of the stream.

"Well, Captain Peters," laughed Lorrain, "I suppose it is one of the two, and I'm quite sure that if the yacht can be got round you'll get her there. If not, well it's all in the game, and I don't suppose we shall get off much better. I feel pretty certain that that little skunk Gregorio will have turned traitor by this time, and, what's more, if Mr. Leigh Tristam and myself meet on this island only one, if either of us, will get off it alive. And after all, that may not be myself, so practically the only chance we have of bringing this little bit of business through is to meet you on board the *Minnehaha* of Samana Bay. And now I think that is about all there is to say."

He put out his hand to Captain Peters, and as the little skipper took it, he said quietly:

"Waal, so-long, seenyor. You are tough-laid, but I believe you're real grit and straight business right through. That's me, too, I hope, and I'll keep my appointment in Samana Bay, or drive the *Minnehaha* bang into Kingdom Come. So-long, seenyor, and, your ladyship, my respectful *au revoirs!*"

As Captain Peters pronounced these last words with scrupulous adherence to the spelling, he let go Lorrain's hand, and waved his own with elaborate respect towards her ladyship.

"Good-bye for the present, Captain Peters!" she said with a prettily gracious little bow. "Good-bye for the present, and I sincerely hope that it will be only for the present."

"It 'll be that or all continuous eternity, your ladyship, and most likely that," said the little man with another elaborate salute.

And then he walked off to get his new mount.

He only waited long enough for the man who was to go back with him to get a few mouthfuls of food and drink, and then the two immediately set off on their return journey. Meanwhile Lorrain had called the other messenger aside, and was engaged in earnest conversation with him. When he had finished this he rode back to where the ten men from the *Minnehaha* were lounging and sitting by the side of the track enjoying a smoke and a spell. They stood up as he approached them, and he said in a low, grave voice:

"I am sorry to say, men, that I have just received very serious news from the coast. That little scoundrel of a President, it appears, has not only got a scheme on foot to jump the yacht and murder everyone on board her while we are away, but I find that these niggers that he has sent with us as porters are really what they call soldiers in this country, and have arms concealed about them and in their packs. The game, of course, is to let us find the treasure that we have come to look for, follow us up with a body of men from San Domingo, join with these blackguards here, and shoot the lot of us down with the exception I suppose of her ladyship yonder, who will probably be kept for something worse. Now this is not only a matter of life and death to us, but of a very considerable amount of treasure, and I don't think you're the men to walk into a trap like that with your eyes open."

"I guess, boss, we had better start in at the shooting right away," drawled one of the men, a tall, tough-looking down-easter. "It don't do to give vermin of this sort any show when there's shooting or knifing on the board."

"What do you think about it, Mr. Sampson," said Lorrain, turning to the second officer.

"I think Davy's advice about the best that could be given under the circumstances," was the reply. "Any one of those niggers would knife the lot of us if he could for a dollar a head. If it's to be us or them I'm for immediate execution."

"So am I," said Lorrain. "It's a pretty sharp measure, but it's life or death, and I think we're justified."

Murmurs of "That's so, seenyor," "Bully for you, boss!" "Niggers don't count anyhow," came from the rest of the men, and when Lorrain saw that they were quite ready for the bloody work that he had decided upon he went on:

"Very well. I am glad to see that you are prepared to stand by me, and you'll see that I shan't forget it, whether we find the treasure or not."

He then told them of their change in their plans and destinations, which had been rendered necessary by the news from the coast, and ended by saying:

"Now as regards these niggers. About a mile further on the track dips down beside the stream into a bit of a cañon. I and her ladyship will ride on ahead as before, and you, Mr. Sampson, will see that the niggers go in first. Then when they're in and we're out of sight, each of you pick your man and let go. A couple of volleys with your repeaters ought to do it, but if they don't I'll see that none of them get past me the other end. Now we'll get on the march again."

The cold-blooded scheme was carried out to the letter. The twenty negro porters went as unsuspectingly as sheep into the narrow defile, and as soon as they were fairly in it, the whites, at a sign from the second officer, scattered along the little ridge and poured a close, deadly volley into the

midst of them. The sudden scream of terror from those who survived it was answered by another rattle of the repeaters, which was echoed by three or four rapid revolver shots from the other end of the canon. It was all over in two or three minutes, and the murderers set to work to strip the packs off their victims and drag their bodies away out of sight among the brushwood. They took what was most essential out of the packs and threw the rest away where they had thrown the bodies. Then they started forward again at a rapid marching pace, few of them thinking any more of what they had just done than if they had shot down so many sheep.

"After all, a Haytian nigger's best when he's dead. He's no good in this world, and if he does happen to be wanted in the next, there's no harm in sending him there," was Lorrain's only comment on the affair in reply to a sort of half reproach from her ladyship.

That evening they encamped in a pretty little glade a couple of hundred yards or so from the stream, and, as it happened, about half a mile below Arthur Pendril's grave.

"I think, from what I've heard Tristam say when he was showing Miss Stevens and my late mistress the plan that he had got from Arthur Pendril, that we can't be very far from the place now. It looks as though there was going to be a lovely starlight night. What do you say to a stroll up the river, and a little preliminary experiment with the Magnet?"

It was her ladyship who spoke. They were just finishing their evening meal, which she and Lorrain were talking together some distance apart from the others. The moon was about four days' old, and the star-clusters of the tropical sky were beginning to shine out brilliantly.

"Yes," said Lorrain, looking up. "I think it would be a very pleasant way of spending an hour or two before we turn in. It's not a very nice night for blockade-running, and I hope to-morrow night we shall have some clouds. But for a stroll in such pleasant company, and for such an interesting purpose, it is perfect, and as soon as I have posted the sentries and taken a few other necessary precautions, in case Mr. Tristam is coming up to pay us a visit, I shall be entirely at your ladyship's service."

About an hour later they were walking up the stream which here narrowed to little more than a brook. Lorrain was on one bank and her ladyship was on the other. He carried a light axe with the back of the blade drawn out to a point so as to serve as a pick, and a bull's eye lantern. She was walking with her right arm stretched out, holding between her finger and thumb a slender thread, at the other end of which hung the Gold Magnet, glittering with its strange lustre in the soft, half light, and swaying aimlessly to and fro. They had traversed over half a mile of the stream in silence, broken only by the sound of their own footsteps and the rippling of the water over the stones. Each of them felt an unwonted restraint and anxiety, a suppressed excitement natural to two people who were trying to do what had never been done in the world before, and who had every reason to believe that this first real trial of the talisman they had both sinned so greatly to get and keep would that night unlock the treasure-house of illimitable wealth for them, since if it showed them where Don Christoval's treasure-chest lay hidden it would also show them where every other golden hoard in the world was to be found.

"Stop!" whispered her ladyship suddenly, and looking across at Lorrain; "I believe we are getting near it. Look at the needle. Do you see, it has stopped swinging and the end is pointing straight up the stream!"

"So it is!" he said, coming across and turning the light of his lantern on the needle. "Come along, Jessica *mia*, and show the way to fortune!"

He slipped his arm through hers and led her along up the stream with somewhat quickened footsteps. About a dozen yards farther on the needle began to swing out ahead, and its forward swings were longer and quicker than the backward ones.

"We are getting hot!" whispered Lorrain, but her ladyship didn't answer. Her eyes were fixed on the uncanny thing that hung from her hand, and her whole soul was filled with dreams of gold. They went on a yard or two more, and then the needle suddenly dipped and swung out over the bed of the stream pointing almost perpendicularly down at the stones under the water. They stopped, and she went close to the brink and bent over with outstretched arm, Lorrain holding her by the other. She swung the needle about over the rippling shallow water, but the moment she held it still the needle stopped swinging and pointed down to the same spot.

"It's there!" she whispered again, looking round at him with bright eyes and white scared face. "There's no doubt about it, it's there. Now what shall we do?"

"Find a few land-marks that will help us to recognise the spot but won't help anyone else to find it," he said, drawing her away from the water and sweeping his bull's-eye about over the bank. "Hullo! What's that?" he said, as the light fell on a long, low mound about twenty paces from the stream.

They went towards it, and saw that there was a rude cross of white pebbles lying on one end of it. She crept closer to his side, and slipped her hand through his arm as she leant over and looked at it.

"That must be where Tristam buried Arthur Pendril," she said in a rather unsteady whisper. "Poor fellow, he little knew that he was going to be buried so near to what he was looking for."

"No," said Lorrain, with one of his gentle, unpleasant laughs, "and it's a very good thing for us that Tristam didn't know it when he was digging this grave. Perhaps, after all, he had some notion. What an infernal misfortune it is that something didn't keep them on the other side of the Atlantic for another week or so!"

(To be continued.)

A WONDER
IN
MODERN JOURNALISM.

Do not fail to order *Home Notes* to be sent you on **Saturday, February 19th.**

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THE PASSIONATE SNAKE.

IF any man supposes that snakes do not understand the speech of human tongues, I—being a snake—will, in this short story, convince him of some other truths also.

We are the accursed of the earth. We have only to be seen to be straightway killed. Every man's hand is against us, not because of his own hate, for men are not cowards, but because of the hate of his women.

We have learnt, therefore, through ages of cruel treachery, to make our blows swift and sure; yet I say to men, with scorn, that we are more honourable and more merciful than they: we give warning before we strike. We give each man one chance, at least, for his life. More, we strike only when our lives are threatened, or our privacy invaded.

I, being a female thing, have known love. Ay, most beautiful and graceful have I been from birth. My form is slender and supple: my movements are sinuous and alluring. The grasses sway in languid undulations, caressing me as I slide slowly through them. My markings are of rich and unusual beauty and brilliancy. It is said that my eyes take on the colour of my moods and passions. When I lie basking in the sunlight, they have the pale blue content of the skies. When I lift myself erect, suspecting danger or treachery, they are like glittering, green emeralds. When I am jealous—what female thing has not been?—they are a pale amber-yellow. *Once* it was said to me that they were—but that must wait.

But I am beautiful, so beautiful that other female snakes hate me. And I heard a man exclaim: "What a handsome thing!" one day even as he lifted his heel to crush me. My beauty saved me, for, looking, he struck so reluctantly that I slid away and escaped.

I was born in a pile of stones on a hill in the lovely Grande Ronde Valley, in Oregon. From my father, a rattlesnake, I inherited my strong will and fierce passions; from my mother, a blue-racer, who had been lured away from her kin down in the green valley, my beauty and grace.

Before I was three months old I had tasted fame. All the male snakes on the hill came to watch me as I coiled and uncoiled my magnificent length over the stones of my home. And, oh, I used to wish that the mated ones would not come, for their mates said such evil things of me! But they would come.

One day in spring, when I was a year old, the king of all the rattlesnakes himself came to see my beauty, and he desired me greatly, although I was so young and he so old. My father was proud and flattered. But I—well, there was a young and bold blue-racer who used to climb the hill from the valley; and on soft, moonless evenings, when my father slept and my mother pretended that she did not hear, I slid down and met him among the deep grasses that grew half way up the hill.

Ah, those hours of first love! Poor human things, who pass your nights within the four walls of a room, I pity you!

We were only snakes. But we had the night and all its sweets woven for ever through our love. Soft winds, scented with the pines on the crest of the Blue Mountains, rippled the grasses above us, as we tasted the bliss of loving companionship. The nighthawk sank to blow his bugle-note beside us; the stars glowed redly through the breathing dusk; from the cañons far up in the hills came the mornful cry of a coyote. Down under the velvet grasses it was dark and sweet, and we were alone, and we loved.

When at length I stole home and coiled myself on the smooth stones, I could not sleep. I lay motionless until the pale greens and yellows came marching up the east, and the trees on the mountain's crest turned, one by one, to gold, and the meadow larks sang, oh, so sweetly, in the valley where I knew *he* lay as motionless as I, dreaming of joys that had been, and longing for those that were to be.

There was a full month of such bliss. But a day came when my father knew; and that night the king of the rattlesnake went down the hill in my stead, and lay in wait for his rival.

* * * * *

When I was convinced that they had killed him, I stole away in the night, and made my way to the other side of the valley, and dwelt alone on another hill, and mourned. There were no snakes, and there were no human things. And, oh, the days were long, and, oh, the nights were lonely.

Deep and passionate was my grief through all the

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spring, and summer, and autumn. When winter drew on, how glad was I to curl myself in a dark, warm place for my long sleep. I recall that my last thoughts were of how dreary and heart-breaking my awakening would be in the spring. Yet when the awakening came—well, I am a female thing, and that must be sufficient explanation.

* * * * *

It was a warm and lovely day in April that I languidly uncoiled and slid out to lie upon the stones. Never shall I forget how the beauty of that day thrilled me! I was glad, I exulted, only to live once more. My memories of love and sorrow seemed vague. Had I ever wished to die? Well, now I longed to live.

The valley stretched before my eyes, green and shining like a great emerald. There were splashes of yellow where the buttercups grew, and there were shooting stars, and all the sweet winds of spring.

I remember my first glimpse of myself in a still pool that spring. You may have observed a woman, reft of her love, in your own life, you human things. You may have seen her tears, her anguish, her garb of woe. Then, when a few months have gone by, you must have one day had your eyes dazzled by her sudden blossoming out into a new and wonderful beauty. You must have marvelled at the colour in her cheeks, the brilliancy of her eyes, the warmth of her mouth, the subtle grace of her movements. So it was with me. Life throbbed once more through all my being.

The loneliness grew unbearable.

One day as I lay curled, half asleep, I heard a step. A moment later a man came close to my heap of stones. I sprang erect, hissing and swelling, for I had not time to escape. He paused and looked at me.

"Beautiful thing!" he said, in a tone of sadness. "Strike, if you will. I shall not harm you."

He threw himself on the ground near me. He was unarmed. Ashamed, but incredulous, I dropped back into a coil, and lay watching him, motionless, save for the slow sliding of my head from side to side. He looked at me steadily.

"That a snake could be so beautiful!" he said, in the same sad tones. He reached out his hand with a caressing motion. "Come," he said, "we are alone. Let us be friends."

His eyes drew me with an irresistible fascination. A new, strange feeling stirred me. I uncoiled, and slid to him with graceful undulations. He laid his hand upon me, and both of us were without fear.

Days passed. I learnt gradually that he had come there to forget a woman. He pitched a tent near the stones and dwelt there. I followed him everywhere, I never permitted him to go out of my sight. I slept at his feet, and with the first dawn-ray I found his hand and curled upon it, waiting patiently for his caress.

One night, when the moon hung large and yellow on the violet breast of the sky, he threw himself upon his blankets, and held out his hand to me.

"I am sorrowful to-night, Lilith," he said—he called me that. "Come close, closer, my beautiful. Make me forget—other nights."

In that hour, as I slid into the warmth of his breast, I knew that sometime, somewhere, I had been a woman. Oh, the wild, sweet, passionate love that shook me. Oh, to utter but one word of it! Oh, to have hands to caress him, soft arms to enfold him, red lips to find his kisses. What had been my sin, then, when I was a woman, that I should have been re-created in this form? Beautiful, oh, beautiful! Yes; but unfitted for any save the lower loves, and this love was of the highest; the love of woman for man.

* * * * *

In the gorgeous pomp of an August dawn the man woke, with the snake twined about him. The woman he had been trying to forget stood beside him. He flung the snake from him and stretched out his trembling arms to the woman.

"Dearest!" she cried. "Did you think I could bear it? I know better. I have followed you, and I shall follow you again!" She sank to him, sobbing, and laid her mouth upon his.

He put his arms round her and held her there silently.

Suddenly she screamed and sprang erect.

"A snake! Kill it! Kill it!"

It was coiled, hissing, to spring at her. Already his hand was on his revolver. There was a flash. The woman screamed again. The snake was dead. In a moment the man had flung it outside the tent, and caught her, sobbing and trembling, to his breast.

"Oh, my dearest," he cried, "if the reptile had struck you, I should have turned the revolver on myself. Oh, my beloved, this accursed time without you! Give me your arms, your lips. Let us make up for this awful time apart!"

ELLA HIGGINSON.

YOU ARE WRONG. These are not thieves running off with other people's money. They are lucky winners who have solved the Popular Picture Riddles (the latest fashion in the puzzle world) in

THE BIG BUDGET 1D.

THE BRIGHT THURSDAY PAPER

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MERESIA

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

"CLEANSE THE EARTH."

"DON'T you know what it is to have a sentence echoing in your head night and day, urging you on—always—always—till your brain reels?" said Meresia. "I can hear the words now: 'Cleanse the earth from all that harms it!' that is the continual cry which rises in my heart. Sometimes it inspires me with a feeling of awe and horror—sometimes I am glad—almost glad—a hideous thought isn't it, that I should be *glad?*"

José Serano looked at the woman long and silently. In her he saw an instrument—a means to accomplish an end. Her face was pale from deadly conflict with her soul. He wondered if he dared trust her with the thing she desired.

"You are mad," he said at last, "to undertake the work of Heaven, when after all you are only a woman. It is God's privilege to kill—God's alone. He places the hurtful crawling things on the earth that they may sting and bite."

"But we, meeting these, put them to death, when we have the strength, or the means. You could give me this advantage!"

Meresia's voice was scarcely raised above a whisper. She had in her eyes the dazed look of a sleep-walker, who dreams of ghastly deeds without grasping their full horror—one who has spoken words without understanding.

The man, on the other hand, realised in full the plan—the proposal she had just made him, and his hot Spanish blood tingled at the thought. For her womanhood, or for her soul, he had no care. He remembered only the cause for which he was a secret worker, and the villainy of the man now about to return to his judge's post in Madrid.

"So your husband is going back to Spain?" said Serano.

"Yes, yes," she answered, wringing her hands, "and I am to go with him. If he is unjust and cruel, as you tell me, how can I endure?"

"Hush! Don't talk so loud."

Meresia had raised her voice, and José went quickly to the door.

"I thought I heard someone outside," he said. "Be careful, Mrs. Aladros. You are unaccustomed to the discussion of crime."

There was something of sarcasm in the doctor's tone, but the woman did not appear to feel this.

"I don't care what happens to me," she said apathetically, and in direct contrast to her previous mood. "I am not afraid of death for myself, even if I break the Sixth Commandment. You see, I have lived with Aladros, and he has imbued me with the lawfulness of murder for the benefit of a community, or even for mere personal convenience. If I compass his death, it won't be from a selfish motive."

"Are you sure you have any motive at all?" asked José quickly. "Are you sure that in your saner moments you will not turn and upbraid me for leaving you loose on the world in your present mood? You need saving from yourself, Mrs. Aladros, and you come to the man who most hates your husband, and who knows enough of him to condone—even to applaud—your scheme."

Meresia went slowly to his side, and looked into his face.

"I have considered everything—success or exposure. I am neither mad nor motiveless."

Serano's breath came slowly through his teeth; it made a low hissing sound, like the travesty of a sigh.

"My husband sent me to you now—he is ill. Here is his letter asking you to return with me. A slight attack of influenza, he called it. Influenza sometimes goes to the brain, and kills people in two or three days. Alfonso is rarely ill—he has never really suffered—perhaps that is why he has the reputation of being the most cruel man in Spain. I don't want him to suffer, but I don't want him to live. If this is sin, then he, Alfonso, is the false prophet, for I am his disciple, and he has made me what I am!"

"Yes, I will come to him; but first I must think—I must consider!"

José walked slowly up and down the room in silence. Meresia crossed to the window, and watched the falling rain. At last he spoke—spoke all his thoughts—and as she listened, the fabric of the room seemed to fade and dissolve, while superhuman forces closed around her. She was out of breath with chasing shadows—she half-opened her mouth and panted. Here was the opportunity—the help—for which she craved—the great gust of wind that could raise the feather, and give it strength. Her faculties, instead of diminishing, by some mysterious but indestructible property enlarged; not weighed hitherto in her balances, nor comprehended in her horizon—they outstripped all the past limits of Meresia's imagination.

She listened to José's vehement and impressive utterances, hardly realising they were the words of a man. He, too, appeared transformed. The laws of conventionality, the sacredness of human life—all were as nothing to him with the lust of revenge in his soul, for the tormented ones whose blood cried loudly from the ground. He was back again—watching the old scenes of torture, hearing the groans from the upper room, the swish of the cruel whip, the clank of the burning irons. Through it all rose the voice of Aladros, sneering, self-satisfied, and then the uproar in the court—the cry: "Assassins, assassins!" And now came a human device, rising through it all on the lips of a woman, willing herself to cleanse the world from such a man. Her crime changed to a moral act of philanthropy, viewed by these side lights.

She was offering to sweep Aladros from off the face of the

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earth, this monster of iniquity, at the risk of enduring reproach, shame, imprisonment, and death!

What could be more terrible to Nature than such a thought?

With fearless eyes she stood—waiting; no longer the girl Meresia—but the wife, and the slayer! An outsider could not possibly have accounted for conduct so totally incompatible with her nature before Aladros claimed his bride, before she knew him as he was.

Now she felt the impelling power strong upon her—goading to sin—deadening her regard of principle, blinding her to the fact that this contemplated treachery was detestable.

She had thrown in her lot with the children of wrath, instantly depreciating both earthly and Heavenly things. The fiery serpents of sin crept to her heart and crawled about there. Legions of malignant spirits compassed the woman's soul on every side, taking the forms of angels, and bidding her "cleanse the earth." Tears of passion stood in her eyes as she drank in José's fierce revilings against Aladros—revilings that echoed the crying of her own spirit. The tears that rose entailed a bitter baptism not to be tasted yet!

Many and urgent were the motives at work, above and beyond her personal horror and contempt for the man.

Lost in the action of stronger emotions, she passed through successive stages of hardness and guilty thought, ever pushing on to reach the climax, to solve the mystery of her own destiny.

Germs of rebellious action had been growing for months secretly, poisoning her blood, fanned to life by her husband's words, who unconsciously preached his own doom.

It was his way to assert authority—to treat her as sold into bondage—to exact implicit obedience. Now the day was fixed for his return to Spain, and Meresia, throwing her confidence upon Serano, awaited the issue of things without fear or trembling, and with a certain fanatical fervour, born of long thinking and energy postponed.

José went to a cabinet, took something out, and gave it to Meresia. Her hand closed over the bottle, which she hid in the recesses of a huge muff.

"I will come with you now," he said, "and see Aladros."

She walked unsteadily to the door. He stood back to let her pass—his eyes fixed upon the fur muff. Then shrugging his shoulders, Serano followed, with the face of a man who had seen the blackest side of life, with the horror and the pain, and trained himself to smile at it all!

In silence they drove through the wet streets, Meresia keeping her eyes fixed on the window, mechanically counting the rain drops that coursed like tears down the mud bespattered pane.

José watched the curve of her neck, and the coils of her hair, for sheer lack of something better to look at. Meresia's beauty appealed to him merely as a picture, and he felt an unpleasant mixture of admiration and contempt for the nature she had revealed to him that day. She was conscious of his scrutiny, and moved uneasily, with a quick indrawing of her breath—a nervous twitching of muscles, as the carriage turned a corner sharply, and brought them in sight of the house. There was straw on the road for a sick man opposite, and the sudden noiselessness came like a funeral hush after the bustle of crowded streets.

Meresia let down the window, and, leaning forward, caught the indriving rain full on her face. Still she said no word, though José opened the door, and waited for her to get out.

"Shall I carry your muff?" he asked.

Meresia held it away from him, and shook her head.

"No," she replied.

They entered the house together. Meresia paused by the fire in the hall, and took up some unopened letters, with a pretence at interest.

"Will you go now to Alfonso's room?" she said. "If so, William will show you the way."

She put up her hand to the mantelpiece, to steady herself.

"Yes," he answered; "but won't you come too?"

"I think you had better see him alone, and tell me afterwards what you prescribe. Alfonso will enjoy a talk, he is not really ill—a little cold. William, take Dr. Serano upstairs."

When Meresia joined them she found her husband sitting up smoking a cigar. He complained of having lost his taste, and declared the cigar was like hay, but beyond that, and a general feeling of depression, there seemed to be little wrong with him.

"I have persuaded Serano to stay here and dine," he said. "I am to keep my room, and after dinner he has promised to play a game of chess." Meresia smiled.

"That is very good of you, Dr. Serano," she murmured. "Now tell me, what is the matter with Alfonso?"

"Influenza. I have sent for some medicine. Be sure you give it him every hour till midnight. I think it will check the illness, and bring it to an abrupt conclusion"

Meresia stayed with her husband till it was time to dress for dinner. Then she changed into a white tea-gown, which Aladros had, on more than one occasion, deigned to admire. Her gown was scarcely whiter than her face, and her voice trembled slightly as she joined in conversation.

Presently the gong sounded, and Meresia went with José Serano to the dining-room below. The room was shaded in red, and cast a glow over their features. A profusion of flowers scented the air heavily, and to the woman racked by suspense, their perfume became intolerable.

"Take that large bowl of lilies out of the room," said Mrs. Aladros, "and leave the door open, William. What a fire!" she continued, turning to José, "I hope it won't overpower you."

"No, I like a burning fiery furnace this time of year."

Meresia tried to eat, but it was a misera'le failure.

"I am rather anxious about Alfonso," she explained. "He seemed worse this evening."

"It will not aid your anxiety if you starve yourself," replied José; "life is, you know, merely a struggle with forces conspiring to put an end to it. Every meal is a sop to ward off physical decay."

Meresia turned to the man behind her chair.

"Go upstairs, and see if your master has everything he wants."

She glanced at the clock as she spoke, then moistened her lips with wine, and waited. Presently came the sound of feet running quickly down the stairs; simultaneously they rose, Meresia holding her breath, and looking across at Serano with something of triumph in her green eyes.

"What is the matter?" he asked, as the servant rushed into the room.

"Oh! the master!" he gasped, "the master!"

CHAPTER XXII.

The Sorrow of it.

"Can I see Mrs. Aladros?" said Elizabeth, standing on the steps of the darkened house. "I have only just heard the dreadful news."

The servant led her to a small boudoir at the back of the drawing-room, where Meresia was sitting tearless and alone.

She flung herself into Elizabeth's arms with a little cry, and clung to her fearfully as to a strong rock in the hour of distress.

"I knew you would come," she said. "I wanted you so badly. It seems years to me since last night."

"My poor Meresia!"

"I cannot realise yet that it is only Alfonso's body upstairs and not Alfonso himself. I had a sort of feeling that he couldn't die, and it was very sudden, very strange He had been ill all day, but only, as I thought, with a cold

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Dr. Serano came and stayed to dinner. I think he knew, and his staying made me anxious. In the middle of dinner we were called to his room, and found that he was sinking rapidly. I believe it is often the way with those very big men. All his strength had left him, his pulse had almost ceased to beat, he was in a state of utter collapse, and a few minutes later became unconscious. Dr. Serano feared the worst immediately; he tried restoratives, but the failure of the heart's action came as quickly as the sudden sinking. In less than ten minutes he was dead!"

"How terrible!" gasped Elizabeth; "but what was the cause?"

"Dr. Serano will explain it to you. He told me, but I hardly listened, I was so upset. Mercifully he was in the house—I don't know what I should have done without him. It appears Alfonso always had a weak heart, and Dr. Serano knew it, though he never told me."

A silence fell between them. At last Meresia continued in low, unemotional tones:

"Have you ever watched the passing away of an earth-bound spirit, Elizabeth—and thought of the pity and the sorrow of it? I fancy a life that disappoints God must disappoint the soul that leads it. Perhaps you wonder that I am not crying, or sitting beside him, perhaps you are a little shocked at me——"

"No," said Elizabeth.

"I should be sorry if you thought me utterly heartless, but I cannot be a hypocrite, and Alfonso never had my heart; you knew that from the first—you were in my confidence. I wish I could tell you everything, but I can't; it would not be fair to make you share my burdens. I have missed the mark—I have played havoc with my life—I have sinned grossly! That is the Greek meaning of sin, 'missing the mark.'"

"Dear Meresia, you have done your best—you tried to be a good wife——"

"Oh! did I? Don't be ironical! I crawled to my husband because he was the stronger; I have only once got the better of him—only once!"

A queer light came into Meresia's eyes; a light that mystified Elizabeth.

"But this talk does not suit my widowhood, and in a few hours my parents will be here."

To Elizabeth, Meresia seemed more passionate and spontaneous during that first day of bereavement than ever before. Once while they talked, she even laughed; but there are women as well as men whose laugh "is as untrue as anything about them."

The seclusion of the house was unbearable, she confessed; her soul was full of wild energy. She could not rest or keep still, but wandered from room to room. She longed to unfold the bitter secret to her friend, to own that at last she had indeed made her tragedy—worked out her life task. The heat of youth burnt in her veins, but she could give no expression to the deep cry of her heart, she could tell no one of the dangers that encompassed her.

A voice from the great deep of Nature alternately convicted and condoned. Now she was prostrate at the judgment seat; now she was saved—pardoned, living in new and ever nobler embodiment, the endless life of an immortal. From a bewildered rhapsody she sank to a torment of struggles, of conscience-stricken shames, of long, severe sorrow, and penitence.

"Talk to me, Elizabeth," she said. "Distract my mind, occupy my thoughts, or give me something to read—some great author—Dante for choice. He is at least human; he got at the root of things. I think he would have understood me to-day. He has been described as 'deep, fierce as the central fire of the world.' Oh, Elizabeth! you don't know what I feel—what I suffer and endure. If I could only let you inside just for a moment, into my heart, that you might see the inward mechanism! What would you say? How would you endure the clear insight? You would hate me; you would be angry; you would condemn! This is not orthodox mourning—this fever of unrest. It is unusual, bad taste, but I cannot help myself. I remember last night, every moment as I talk, that dread hour 'big with destiny,' that slow sinking death, after the senses had fled. I counted the minutes by the clock till he should die. I could not bear to look, for I knew death was in the room; it came all round me—it was something cold and horrible. I wanted to scream, but my throat was parched. I was voiceless—dumb! Everything flashed before me—from the very first day I saw Alfonso; it passed in scenes—the mirror of my brain was never clearer at reflecting. I recalled much of what he had told me about life and things—coloured by his dreadful scepticism! They appeared in the presence of death to be the mournfullest, meanest ideas, without a grain of truth. His scepticism was not only intellectual, but also moral—a chronic disease of the soul. There was nothing submissive or reverent in him; it was all argument and obstruction with Alfonso. He pitied no one—not even the poor wretches that were placed in his power. He burnt them, like the chaff, and bragged of his Godforgetting unbelief. This was the influence I came under daily—hourly! Elizabeth, can you wonder I am embittered? Are you surprised that the Devil found his way to me, and tempted and, tormented?"

"You mean," said Elizabeth, "that your faith is shaken?"

"Not quite that, but from toleration I grew to hate my husband, my fear of him changed to defiance and indignation, though he never guessed or knew. Now he is dead, and in all common decency, I ought to sorrow and weep."

"Meresia, I do not blame you—I understand."

"If you only could, but that is impossible. Listen, someone is coming up the stairs, I can't see any one, my nerves are on the rack. Oh! Elizabeth, keep them away, save me from the condolences of my family."

The door opened, and José Serano came in. A sigh of relief escaped Meresia.

"Your father and mother are here," he said. "They are waiting to see you."

"Elizabeth," she whispered, "will you go down and bring them up?"

"Certainly, dear."

"And, Dr. Serano, stay with me till they come."

As Elizabeth went, Meresia crossed to the door, and stood with her back against it, questioning Serano with her eyes.

"You have nothing to fear," he said, "I've made the causes of death quite clear to every one, there is no suspicion."

She could hardly catch his words; he spoke in cautious undertones.

"According to Alfonso's teaching, it was not a crime," she said. "Thousands of generations have died, and what is one—one life hurried out of this inane existence a few years before its time that it might do less harm, and have a shorter account to answer for?"

"Hush! We had better not talk of it now. Only, for Heaven's sake, keep calm. The very walls have ears and eyes for guilty men and woman. Remember you are a—— "

He checked the word "murderess," but Meresia felt its sting, and shuddered. She looked irresistably pathetic.

"You have done well," he said, "don't grieve. It is something to have dared Heaven's work—and at your age!"

A new nature seemed to have come to Meresia in these first hours of self-sought widowhood. It was as if she had taken hands with a superhuman power, and lost her touch on transient things.

This deep-hearted daughter of crime, with the mysterious green eyes, had new and confusing thoughts, which at least were earnest. For the first time in her life, she was alone with the reality of things.

"Elizabeth is long," she said; "they are talking it over downstairs all in ignorance! How vile they would think

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me if they knew! Such a thing has, probably, never been committed before by any of our stock. Even now it is like a dream, and I am afraid that the door will open and Alfonso appear in the flesh."

She moved nearer the fire, and listlessly opened a book. To José she was still an enigma—a mixture of vices and virtues brought from her home and gathered from Aladros. In measured but melodious tones, she read the words that met her eye:

"'What am I? What is this unfathomable thing I live in, which men name Universe? What is life; what is death? What am I to believe? What am I to do?'"

The sorrowing parents crept softly to the little room where their widowed daughter mourned, and paused wonderingly as they pushed the door back unperceived.

On one side of the hearthrug stood Serano, with folded arms and impassive face, listening while Meresia read aloud chance passages from the book she held.

They exchanged bewildered glances, and it was Elizabeth's voice that broke the spell.

"Meresia," she said.

Mrs. Aladros sprang to her feet, and let the book fall. It clattered against the fender.

She saw the surprise on her parents' faces, and felt acutely her tea less position.

She held out one hand to each, and kissed first her mother and then her father. They had been prepared for hysterical grief, for lonely mourning, or overpowering despair, but not for this unexpected silence—this unnatural calm.

She drew them to the fire and shivered slightly.

"My dear child," cried Mrs. Milford, wiping her swollen eyes, "what can I do to comfort you?"

"Nothing," she answered, "I am only rather cold. Alfonso is cold, too. There is death everywhere—it follows me even here. I want to get away from it, I——"

She broke off, and bending down, stirred the blaze.

"I suppose I am cold-blooded," she continued, "like the fish. I can't tell you what I feel—fish have no language you know, like birds and beasts—their utmost power of sound is a feeble cry of pain."

Her words were so unexpected that the conventional soul of the mother stood aghast.

It was altogether a new phase to Mrs. Milford, who through joy and grief had ever followed the orthodox lines, and in her inmost heart she blamed Meresia, though she would not have said so—even to her husband—who was by no means loth to discuss his daughter's behaviour.

"To tell you the truth," he said, when they were alone, "I don't believe she ever cared for Alfonso."

"My dear," replied his wife, "Meresia simply adored him. Can't you see she is stunned by the blow?"

"I think it looks a deal more like frank indifference," retorted Mr. Milford. "But that is not a bad excuse if it should be noticed. 'Stunned by the blow!' I will remember those words."

Mrs. Milford dropped the subject by collapsing into silence.

Her daughter's attitude annoyed, and, at the same time, gave rise to thankfulness. She was not herself a very soulful person, but at the same time considered a philosophical acceptation of grief to be unbecoming in a young widow. A few emotional scenes at such a period were to be expected.

To herself even Mrs. Milford tried to paint her daughter in softer lights. Meresia had exceptional powers of control, fortitude consisting of self-repression under adverse circumstances and overwhelming calamity. It was her desire to save others pain, this hiding of her woe—a feeling, perhaps, that her sorrow was too deep for them to understand.

"We must bear with her gently," the mother said, "and when the tears come and she sobs out all her misery in my arms, then the worst will be over. Nature must have her way, but I think she is proving exceptionally cruel to my poor Meresia!"

(To be continued.)

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

P. R. E. A.—Probably you mean the river Tinto in Spain. The stream petrifies the sand in its bed, and stones that by chance touch one another are rapidly united into one piece. It is impossible for fish to live in this water.

S. D. T.—All birds when perched on trees or bushes serve as weathercocks, as they invariably arrange themselves with their heads to the wind.

AMATEUR.—The dexterity and suppleness of an acrobat is due entirely to constant practice. They are generally taught at a very early age, beginning with some simple motions like bending backwards until the head touches the floor, and rising again without the aid of the hands. Afterwards more difficult feats are learnt, until the muscles and joints become so supple that the whole frame can be twisted to almost any angle with apparent ease.

A. S. C. wants to know how it is that when a shower of rain begins with very big drops it is usually a very short one.————For two reasons. In the first place because wind which absorbs vapour in the clouds and causes them to disappear by blowing two or more raindrops into one, naturally increases the size; and, secondly, because the greater the distance of the rain-cloud from the earth, the larger will be the drops, and when a cloud is away up in the air, showers seldom last long.

D. G.—It is a strange fact that birds fish, and reptiles, are better able to distinguish colours than quadrupeds. Birds are very quick at distinguishing the colours of fruits, and are particularly fond of brightly-coloured objects, as the owners of red currant bushes and cherry trees can testify; even bees have been found to distinguish colour, showing a decided preference for blue.

COBB.—The average age of a dog is about fifteen years, although they sometimes live to be nearly thirty.

D. L. C.—Crows were not always regarded as pests. The ancients used to employ them as letter bearers in the same way that we now use carrier pigeons.

A CORRESPONDENT when travelling in the East came across a curious form of courtship, and thinking it might interest the readers of *Short Stories*, writes: "One day in Burmah I noticed a man sitting by the roadside glaring fiercely straight ahead of him at something he certainly could not see from his position. Passing again the next day I again saw him, still in the same attitude, and my curiosity being aroused I inquired of an English resident as to what it meant. 'Oh, he is in love,' was the answer, and then it was explained to me that when a Burmese falls in love he has to seat himself at some distance from his adored one, and wait for her to do the rest. If she condescends to look in his direction once or twice on the first or second day, he is wildly encouraged, but if on the third day she nods at him and smiles, it is time for him to consult papa."

THE volume of *Pearson's Magazine* offered to the reader who re-wrote a given paragraph in the smallest space has been won by Mr. S. C. Hurford, care of O. Hurford, Station-master, Walnut Tree Bridge, near Cardiff, S. Wales.

R. N. B.—Most of the hair used in wig-making is obtained from the heads of German peasant girls, many of whom will exchange a fine head of hair for a shawl and a few commonplace trinkets offered by agents.

T. S. S. asks: "What is the cause of the feeling of impending misfortune which comes over one when lying awake at night?"————This question has puzzled psychologists since the beginning of history, and it has been answered in many different ways, some possible and others improbable. The view now most generally held is that when lying awake at night, the controlling power of the mind is not so great as when the body is active, and ideas rise in rapid succession, suggesting to the judgment all possible developments of the thoughts which last occupied the mind of the distressed person.

J. J.—It is not the custom at present to put either cream or sugar into the tea or coffee for one's guests. The tea should be sent round and the other ingredients separately, in order that they may help themselves.

AN OLD MAID.—A hundred years ago, unmarried, as well as married women, were styled "Mrs." Girls were called "Miss" until they left school, when they took rank as "Mrs.," while married women were very generally addressed as "Madam."

AN INQUIRING MIND would like to know how it is that an eagle can look at the sun without blinking.————By means of a thin, transparent veil, which the bird can draw instantaneously over its eyes without affecting its vision in any way.

SUPER.—The oldest existing playhouse in London is the Sadler's Wells Theatre. It is now an inferior place of entertainment, and exceedingly moderate in its charges for accommodation, a stall ticket being obtainable for threepence. Contrary to general belief, the audience is exceedingly well-behaved.

P. W. M. is curious to know the origin of the expression "To propose a toast."————A toast is, of course, a name given or a sentiment suggested, to which guests are invited to drink in compliment. In olden days our ancestors approved of using toasted bread with their drinks, and toast still floats in the loving cup, and also the cups called copus, bishop, and cardinal at the universities. Hence, the lady named, or the sentiment proposed, was the toast or savour of the wine which gave the draught piquancy and merit.

R. M. B.—The reason that lightning is zigzag is because, as it condenses the air in the immediate advance of its path, it flies from side to side in order to pass where there is the least resistance to its progress.

M. T.—Silkworms produce twelve times as much silk as do spiders.

CORDER is anxious to know if the belief that the wearing of earrings is a cure for weak eyes is anything more than vulgar superstition.————I am bound to say that there is some slight ground for believing in the remedy. The truth of the matter is that by piercing the ears a counter irritation is set up, which may affect more or less of a cure. When once the skin has grown over the wound, the rings in the ears are as useless as they would be in the toes; the object of the gold rings is to keep the wound open as long as possible, and hence the magical power with which they have been credited, especially by sailors.

CADET.—Napoleon Bonaparte was of neither French nor even Corsican origin, but German. His ancestors emigrated from Germany to Genoa in the eleventh century.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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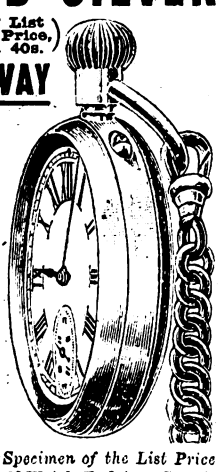

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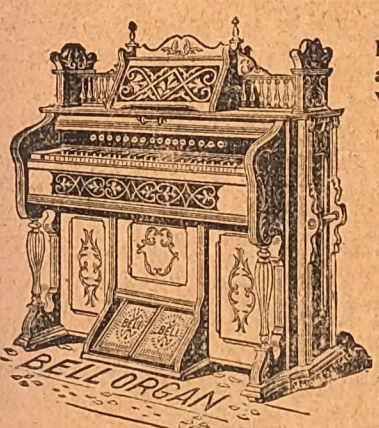

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(Combe and Gilchrist Lecturer, etc.), expressed by him in a Lecture on Foods:

"I am distinctly of opinion that the modern tendency to add to Cocoa other substances, mostly of a stimulating nature, is a dietetic mistake, a practice to be thoroughly discouraged. **If you have a pure Cocoa you want nothing else in the way of constituting it a food, for it contains in itself all the principles which go to make up a perfect article of diet.** When people begin to add to Cocoa, Hops and Kola and other things, they are interfering with and altering its dietetic value. Cocoa thus treated is not Cocoa but something else, and I have declined for my part, in all my long advocacy of Cocoa as a food to recognise that **anything but pure unadulterated Cocoa can correspond with this definition of a perfect and desirable diet.** I hope the time is not far distant when the public will awaken to a knowledge of the fact that 'doctored' cocoa is not a thing to be recommended or advised as a food."

CADBURY'S COCOA

IS ABSOLUTELY PURE, AND A PERFECT FOOD.

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will not only help to improve your digestion and consequently your health, but will also bring back that energetic and happy feeling of good health. Man does not live a natural life, so a good portion of a natural food, in the shape of HOVIS, at each meal will largely counteract the bad influence that modern life has upon the health and digestive organs. This is not an idle remark, but a proved statement, daily being verified.

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Sick Headache, Constipation,
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MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE.
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Agents Wanted.
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.
MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger, Lemon, Orange, Blackberry, etc.
YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

SHORT STORIES

No. 474.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 29th, 1898.

The Mysterious Figures.

One day last January I received the following cablegram from Messrs. Radix and Pollen, of Rotterdam, Holland:

Will you go to Guiana for us? Come if "yes."

Messrs. Radix and Pollen import roots, barks, herbs, and dyewoods from South America; in fact their house is the leading one in that line in Europe. I had been on botanical excursions to South America for this firm several times before. I therefore took it for granted that the telegram referred to a similar commission.

As they had cabled their inquiry I knew that they desired no delay, so an hour later my answer,

Coming on *Hollandia*.

was on the wires. Two days later I sailed for Rotterdam.

Arrived there, I immediately called at the office of Radix and Pollen. After the usual introductory phrases about the trip over, the weather, and our respective good healths, we proceeded to business.

"You were no doubt surprised," said Pollen, "at our cablegram? Our business is so important, however, that we want it taken in hand without delay.

"With the last vessel from our factory on the Surinam we received a letter from our superintendent there; in it he stated that an Indian, one of the Galibis from the lower Maroni river, had called at the factory for a few days, always more or less drunk. In the course of a talk the superintendent had with him the Indian said that he knew of a tract of rosewood trees several miles in extent.

"From his talk our people there could not determine whether the tract was on Dutch ground or over the river in French Guiana. As a great sum of money was eventually involved, the superintendent concluded to keep the Indian at the factory (to prevent him from talking to other parties) until he heard from us.

"We think the matter worth investigation, and concluded to send you over to do so.

"Our steamer, the *Cortex*, will be ready to sail in about a week. Get your things ready and go out in her. The business may be settled in a few months, it may take longer, and it may be that the Indian lied altogether. Go and see what you can do. We have obtained a blank grant from the Dutch government, so that if the tract exists we can pre-empt immediately."

My preparation for the trip was soon made. Everything necessary for the work in the forest I could obtain at the factory. I only needed a supply of necessaries for the long ocean voyage.

These "factories," as the trading stations are called, are simply storage houses established by the European traders

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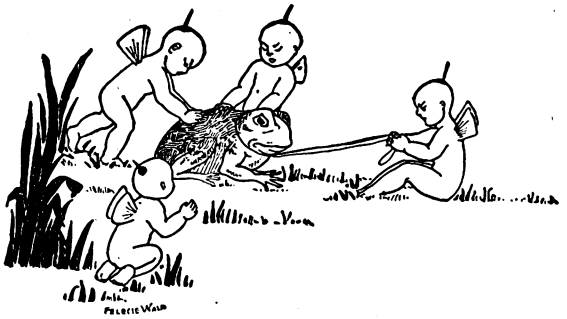

at convenient points along the coast. Here the natives bring their gold, ivory, skins, roots, dyewoods, etc., and exchange them for rum, cast-iron knives, more rum, calico, brass wire, more rum, obsolete fire-arms and other European commodities. Messrs Radix and Pollen had three such factories on the Guiana coast.

In due time the *Cortex* sailed and arrived at Paramaribo after a long and somewhat tedious trip. At Paramaribo we discharged freight for that port and then continued along the coast to the mouth of the Maroni river. Here the factory was situated to which I was des ined.

At the factory my arrangements were soon made. Indian carriers were selected, supplies to last us for three months were packed, guns and revolvers were examined, cartridge belts filled, and the thousand and one other things attended to that were necessary to insure the safety of an expedition into a South American forest.

After a week's hard work we were ready, and started upon our tramp into the forest.

Week after week we toiled on, chopping our way through the inextricable mass of tangled vines, creepers, roots, and undergrowth of the primeval forests, harassed by ants whose bite raised a blister the size of an hazel-nut, dreading to set foot on the ground for fear of treading on a snake, and yet fearing to keep the eyes fixed upon the ground for dread of walking into a snake hanging from a branch, like a whipthong discarded by a driver, or like a piece of huge cable, able to crush the largest beast in its folds.

If we came to a clear, cool stream flowing temptingly in the shades of the forest, we hardly dared bathe in it for fear of the gymnotus—the electric eel—whose shock, while not always fatal, is always very unpleasant.

And then, after passing the day with every nerve strained to its highest tension, when night came it was necessary to wrap one's self up very carefully lest some unprotected part of the body attract a vampire. These hideous bats settled themselves noiselessly upon the exposed neck, hand, arm or other part of the body, and insert their lancet-like sucker under the skin of the unfortunate.

After filling themselves with blood they flit silently away into the forest, leaving the wound open. Then, when the traveller awakes, he is generally so weak from loss of blood that very often he can no longer bear up successfully against the equatorial fevers.

At last, however, we came to the end of our journey. After battling for five weeks with the tropical vegetable and animal world we came, as the Indian had said, to a veritable forest of rosewood trees. As we saw later, the edge of the forest was but a few miles from the river.

After having satisfied myself as to the extent of the grove, exact location, distance from the river and best route to the river, I set the Indian carriers to work making a canoe, as I intended to return to the factory by way of the river.

While enjoying a brief rest and a pipe on the river bank, I carelessly examined the rocks rising in a dense mass from the river, and was startled to see the figure of an arrow carved deeply into the rocks a few feet above my head. Naturally, I asked myself why the arrow was there. Cleaning the face of the rock from vines and moss I followed up the direction indicated by the arrow. Foot by foot I scanned the surface until I saw a place where an opening about a foot square in the rock had been closed with a stone, roughly chipped to fit the opening. This stone cover was wedged into place tightly with several large iron spikes.

Returning to camp, I got a small axe and then proceeded to remove the stone lid. After working for half-an-hour I succeeded in removing one of the spikes; with it I displaced the others, and finally probed out the covering stone, disclosing an opening about a foot deep, in which lay a large copper powder flask.

On shaking the flask it seemed to be empty, and I was about to throw it into the river when I thought I might as well open it. As it was impossible to remove the screw cap, I chopped off the head of the flask and saw that the flask only contained a tightly rolled paper.

Upon unrolling the paper I saw that it was covered with writing; this, after studying it for half-an-hour, I was enabled to read.

It was a letter, signed Yan Kerkenberg, giving instructions to some one coming after him.

The letter described how the writer had left his vessel at anchor at the mouth of the river, and how he had made the trip up the river in a rowing-boat. From the landing place at the rock, where I had found the flask, the diamond mines, according to the Indian guide, were distant in the direction given, inland, a journey of about two weeks.

In case the party following should not meet Kerkenberg on the road coming or going, he would cruise along the coast the stated time and then return to Dykendorp.

So much for the letter. From the coating of patina on the flask and the faded appearance of the writing, I judged that many years had passed since the flask had been placed in the rock by some hardy adventurer in search of wealth.

As soon as our canoe was finished I took two of the carriers and started down the river to the factory; the rest of the men I left at the camp in charge of one of the whites from the factory who had accompanied us.

Arrived at the factory, we soon had all arrangements made to send a force of men up the river to the camp; then, for myself, there remained nothing else to do but wait in patience until the *Cortex* returned.

One evening I mentioned my find in the rock to the superintendent of the factory, and was astonished to hear that he had heard of Kerkenberg.

"Yan Kerkenberg," said he, "was one of two brothers who carried on a promiscuous kind of a sea trade, chiefly between Holland and our coast here. This was long before my time, however. I heard one version of the story shortly after I came here, some twenty years ago, from the older among the Indians. Later I heard more of the story from the authorities at Cayenne, so I think I have it about right.

"Well, each of the two Kerkenbergs commanded a small vessel; they bought, or stole, and sold slaves and

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anything or everything they could convert into money. It seems that they also did a little bit of piracy now and then. At any rate the authorities at Cayenne, some forty years ago, accused the two brothers of a long list of crimes, hung the one brother Diederick, on general principals, and confiscated his ship and cargo. The other brother Yan, was known to be off the coast hereabouts at the same time, but after the hanging of his brother he disappeared. They said at that time that he had left here for fear his vessel would be confiscated also, but it seems, from the letter that you have found, that he went up the river.

"Perhaps he returned. I doubt it, however. From what you have just gone through in the last weeks you know it is a huge undertaking to penetrate into the woods, provided with all help possible. For a seaman to go in, accompanied by only a lot of sailors, is simply to hand himself over to the snakes, Indians, or starvation.

"I think Yan's bones are lying in the woods somewhere, and that his ship waited a certain time at the river mouth for him. As he failed to appear again, the ship no doubt put to sea without him. At any rate his ship never returned to this part of the coast.

"His name, by-the-way, was Churchill. He was an Englishman, and had merely changed his name into a kind of Dutch and called himself Kerkenberg. He no doubt had reasons for so doing. I suppose in his wanderings up and down the coast, Kerkenberg heard of diamond mines in the interior and started out to find them. If he did not die on the road from other causes he was most assuredly killed and robbed by the Indians."

On the home trip, when the *Cortex* stopped at Cayenne, I looked over the records there and saw that Diederick Kerkenberg had really been hanged there for piracy, and that search had been instituted at the same time for Yan, without results, however.

Upon the arrival of the *Cortex* at Rotterdam I reported at the offices of Messrs. Radix and Pollen, settled our business relations, and then started on a short tramp afoot through part of Holland before returning to New York. On my tramp I had Kerkenberg again called to mind by stumbling into a village called Dykendorp.

Prompted by idle curiosity, I asked my landlord if he had heard anything of a mariner called Kerkenberg many years before.

"Kerkenberg!" said he, folding his hands over his breast and gazing reverently at the ceiling, "do I know anything of him? I do, God keep him in grace for ever and let the kingdom of Holland prosper! Why, man, they eat his annual dinner right here in this house every 4th of August. We will always think of Kerkenberg, at least so long as the kingdom of Holland exists."

Later in the evening, over a pipe and a glass, the landlord told me the following story:

"Yan and Diederick Kerkenberg were merchant sailors who sailed from here for many years. They traded between here and South America. They generally came into port here about the same time and always sailed away together.

"Once, so my father, who knew them both, told me, Diederick left port suddenly before Yan was ready. A few weeks after Diederick had sailed Yan called to the town council together and told them that he wished the town to remember his name for ever. As he and his brother stood alone in the world he had arranged matters so that the town itself would see to it that his name should not be forgotten. For this purpose he had purchased a plot of ground in the village churchyard. In this plot he had placed a slab of granite with the name of Kerkenberg cut upon it; the plot he had had inclosed with an iron railing.

"Then he deeded 1,000 florins to the town upon the following conditions:

"The money was to be placed out at interest three-quarters of the interest obtained was to be used in providing an annual banquet of the town officials, the minister, the school teacher and whatever guests the town officials might see fit to invite.

"This banquet is to take place every year on the 4th of August. My house has been honoured by having the last ten held in it.

"This bauquet is to be held, provided that the sexton hands to the burgomaster, one week before its date, a written statement that he has looked after the Kerkenberg plot during the year, and has kept it in order, the fence painted, and the slab clean. For this labour and expense the sexton was to receive the remaining quarter of the annual interest."

The next morning I called upon the burgomaster, and heard the same story from him, and was shown the original deed of gift to the village.

This deed is in the form of a letter, and is addressed to his brother, Diederick, also called Richard Churchill. It is written on heavy paper, in Dutch, and is witnessed by the burgomaster and village attorney of that time for Dykendorp and by Yan Kerkenberg, also called John Churchill, and one of his mates for Kerkenberg.

On turning the deed in my hands, while listening to the burgomaster, I noticed a row of figures on the back of it. On calling the burgomaster's attention to the figures, he told me that they had always been there. He supposed that Kerkenberg had written his deed on a sheet of paper without examining it first, and that the figures had been on the sheet before the deed was written.

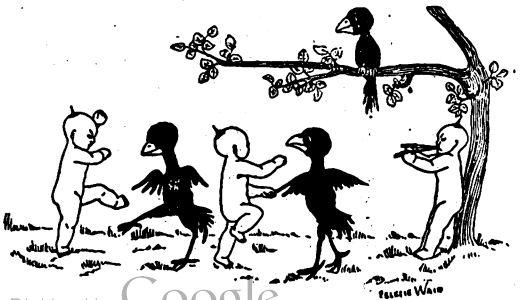
At any rate the figures were there, and as they did not interfere with the annual dinner, it was really not worth while giving them a second thought.

As the deed was such a peculiar one I asked permission to copy it, this was readily granted. While copying it I thought of the figures on the back and copied them also.

In due course of time I finished my tramp and returned to Rotterdam. There I took passage in one of the steamers for New York.

By chance there were only a few cabin passengers on board on that trip; as they were either too old or too young for company for me, I was thrown upon my own resources to kill time.

One day, while hunting for a novel in my trunk, I saw my copy of the deed and took it on deck to read it over



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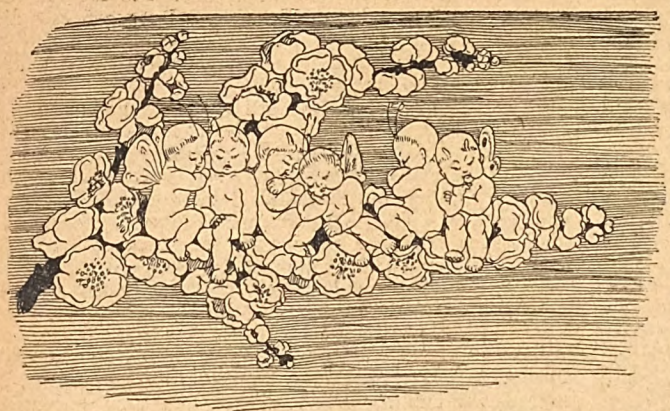

again. Then the figures on the back again arrested my attention. I was positive that the figures had been placed there intentionally and that they had some ulterior meaning.

But why were they placed there and what did they mean? But, first of all, here are the figures: 1139, 4185, 4142, 1582, 0514, 1520, 1914, 8151, 0.

Settling myself in a quiet corner, I lit my pipe and proceeded to cross-question myself about it as follows:

"Why are the figures on the deed?"

"Because somebody put them there."

"Good," thought I, "now we are progressing."

"Who put them there?"

Here the progress came to a dead stop.

From the care with which official documents are treated in Europe and the veneration the people there have for such a paper, with its red seals, I decided, most emphatically, that the figures had not been upon the document after it became one.

At the time the deed was written a nice big sheet of clean paper was not thrown about in a Dutch village dwelling and scribbled upon carelessly, simply because such a sheet was rarer and more expensive then than now. Consequently, I took it for granted that the figures had been put upon the paper before it was converted into a deed, intentionally.

If this was the case then Yan Kerkenberg was the one who put the figures there.

Let us take for granted and continue questioning.

Why did he put them on the deed?

Well, surely not out of mere fun of scribbling! Men of his class do not waste time in that way.

Perhaps it was a message?

To whom?

Well, as the deed of gift is in the form of a letter to his brother, why should not these figures represent some message or codicil intended for that same brother?

If Diederick returned to Dykendorp before Yan he would of course hear of the deed immediately; as it was addressed to him he would of course read it! Then he would naturally see the figures! if they were intended for him, he would of course know how to decipher them.

If it was a message of some kind from Yan to Diederick, it was of such a nature that it was intended only for him, it was of importance and value.

As the brothers were English, and as the message was left in Dutch hands, it was most likely that it was couched in English. Now I took it for granted, from the two samples of Yan's handwriting that I had seen, that his education had been carried just far enough to enable him to write a few lines when necessity absolutely required it; consequently, if Yan had made use of a cypher he had used the simplest kind he could invent. Now one of the simplest cyphers consists in replacing the letters of the alphabet by figures, taking one for A, two for B, three for C, and so on.

Following out this theory, I obtained the following: 1139, 4185, 4142, 1582, 0514, 1520, 1914, 8151, 0, DAHE, DADB, AEHB, EAD.

Here I was compelled to stop. The nought upset my theory. Then I started over again, commencing with 0, 1, 2, etc.

On this basis I worked for two days without results, or rather with negative results.

At last I started with my first arrangement, and said that the nought in the fifth block of figures belonged to the 2 in the proceeding block, making 20; this would then represent the letter T.

From that point I worked forward and backward, and then had my letters and figures, grouped as follows:

11, 3, 9, 4, 18, 5, 4, 14, 21, 5, 8, 20, 5, 14, 15, 20, 19, 14, 8, 15, 10: K, C, I, D, E, D, N, U, E, H, T, E, N, O, E, S, N, H, O, J.

Returning to the original grouping I got:

KCID, REDNU, EHT, ENOTS, NHOJ.

One step farther showed me that the first four letters, reversed in position, gave the word:

"DICK"

Then I shouted "Hurrah!" and went down below, and interviewed—well, I went below and came on deck again feeling somewhat better. (The Dutch mail steamers carry a brand of Chateau Margeau that is really exquisite.)

Having my entering wedge, I easily pried the letters into the right position; transposed they gave:

DICK UNDER THE STONE JOHN.

Hurrah, and hurrah again! John had hidden something *under the stone* for Dick. There was only one stone that could be meant, and that was the granite slab in Yan's plot in the churchyard.

The "something" that was there must be of value, as Yan had paid one thousand florins to the town in order to have it guarded for him; no doubt booty acquired by the brothers in their voyages.

For the present I could do nothing but think and make plans as each revolution of the screw was driving the steamer, and me with it, farther away from Holland.

By the time I arrived in New York I had made up my mind to return to Holland.

Leaving the Dutch steamer immediately upon its arrival at New York, I boarded one of the fast liners and steamed off the next day for England. From there I crossed the Channel to Holland, and, after making a few purchases in Rotterdam, took the first train for Dykendorp.

There I rented a small cottage, telling the landlord that I expected two cousins, who would stay with me for a few weeks. I told the people that I would stay a couple of months in the place to study Dutch.

For a week or so I walked about, showing myself everywhere in the place, talked broken Dutch to old and young, and told them where I came from, what I was doing in the village, how long I intended to remain, how old I was, and in fact, satisfied their curiosity in every way.

After two weeks the villagers ceased to bother me

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with questions. They counted me as one of them and paid no particular attention to me; this was just what I had laboured to attain.

Not knowing how deep I would be compelled to dig under the stone, and knowing that I would have only one night to dig in, I practised digging in the cellar of my cottage until I could handle my short coal miner's pick and spade like a veteran.

As good luck would have it, I had been enabled to rent a cottage on the outskirts of the village. The garden belonging to the cottage was bounded by the churchyard wall. This enabled me to pass from my cottage into the churchyard with very little risk of being seen.

It was now only necessary for me to wait for a suitable night. This came sooner than I had hoped. A heavy wind started in the afternoon, and by supper time it was blowing great guns in from sea. An hour after the streets of the village were dead and deserted.

Now was my time. Taking my tools, I hurried through the garden, jumped over the low churchyard wall, and a minute later I was in Yan Kerkenberg's grounds.

There I sat down and listened. The clock in the church tower started to strike the hours. Although but a few hundred feet away, I could barely hear the deep booming of the bell through the howling of the wind and the roar of the surf on the beach.

Then I went to work. I dug down about two feet deep along one side of the stone and then I started to dig under it; the rain beat upon me and soon had me wet to the skin; the wind swayed the trees to and fro and whistled in shrill tones among them. I neither felt the rain nor heard the wind. I dug, dug, dug, till I thought my back would break and my arms fall off.

At last my spade gave back a hollow sound as I forced it into the earth. Then I forgot back, arms, wind, rain —everything but my digging. Soon I had laid bare one side and the ends of a small chest. A few sharp blows with a short, heavy steel bar broke in the side of the chest enough to enable me to thrust my hand into it. This I did, and felt that the chest contained, seemingly, bricks, covered with heavy canvas! A few wrenches with the bar broke out the entire side of the box, and I proceeded to take out the contents.

One after another my trembling hands pulled out the "bricks"—one, two, three, four, five and so on until the chest was empty, then I had twenty-one heavy little bricks lying beside me on the ground. Loading myself with as many as I could carry, I hastened to the dividing wall, and threw them over into my garden. Four times I made the trip, and then I proceeded to fill up the hole I had made.

After that I returned to the garden and carried my bricks into the house. There I saw that my bricks were gold ignots, each weighing about twelve pounds.

With the first glimpse of dawn I returned to the churchyard and obliterated the traces of my digging. As the plot outside of the granite slab, had been covered with shells and gravel, I succeeded beyond my expectations. The rain that still came down soon washed the adhering earth from the shells and gravel and made it difficult to detect traces of my work.

I had now over two hundred and fifty pounds of gold to carry away from the village. The next question was to get it away immediately and without suspicion. To do this I adopted the following plan. From a dealer in the village I purchased several hundred small glazed tiles, telling him I might want to use them some day to fit up my bathroom. I ordered him to purchase a heavy chest for me to ship them in and to send the chest and tiles to my house.

This he did. Then I packed the ingots securely in the chest, the tiles I buried in the cellar.

The next morning I shipped my chest to Rotterdam; as the tile dealer's men took the chest to the railway station, the weight did not cause any remarks, as they took it for granted that the chest contained the tiles I had purchased from their master.

In Rotterdam I sold the ingots, receiving eleven thousand pounds for the same.

Although Yan Kerkenberg had stated himself that he and his brother stood alone in the world, I had extensive inquiries made through a firm of lawyers in Rotterdam for eventual heirs.

They found that the two Churchills had come from Bourneham in England, but could discover no direct or indirect heirs.

Through the same legal firm I then had one thousand pounds deeded to the village of Dykendorp, the interest of this sum to be given annually, on Yan Kerkenberg's day, to those fishers of the village who had suffered loss at sea during the year, or who, in consequence of poor fishing, had need of aid.

* * * * *

I have now given up travelling in equatorial regions, but I often think that the stone that Kerkenberg *really* meant was the one on the river bank in Guiana.

Should I go there again? Did the arrow mean more than to point to the hiding place of the flask? Who can tell?

H. C. STIEFEL.

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Look out for our GRAND NEW SERIAL Next Week.

Mr. Krell's Million.

It was about nine o'clock on Christmas Eve. The lights were burning unusually late in Mr. Krell's office, for Dakins, the book-keeper, was getting off the balance-sheet. He had just summed up the final column and was meditating over the row of figures before him, when Mr. Krell entered from his private room.

"Well, Dakins," said he, "have you finished?"

"Yes, sir, it's all ready for you," answered the other, "and I think you will be very much pleased with the result. I congratulate you, sir, on your fortune at last reaching seven figures."

"Ah," said Mr. Krell simply. He was not a demonstrative man, but for a moment his features relaxed their customary rigidity, and he seemed about to give away to a feeling of joy. He quickly recovered himself, however, and, as if ashamed of his weakness, he scrutinised the balance-sheet with a face as expressionless as a sphinx. Presently he folded the paper up and placed it in his breast pocket. Then, going into the inner office, he brought out a gold chronometer—one which had formerly belonged to one of his ships, and which watchmakers had pronounced irreparable—and requested the book-keeper's acceptance of it as a gift. He furthermore gave Mr. Dakins two distinct shakes of the hand, and, for the first time since the latter had been in his employ, now twenty-six years, he actually wished him a merry Christmas! It was too much for Dakins. The gift was unexpected and unprecedented. He strove in vain to articulate his gratitude, and had to content himself with sundry bows as he retreated from the room.

The substance of Mr. Krell's reflections after he was left alone might be summed up in a very few words. A millionaire at last! A millionaire at last! The delightful thought absorbed him for several minutes, then he arose, locked up the office, and went home.

Mr. Krell was a widower and had no children. He lived in a small house in the suburbs. His housekeeper, Mrs. Mathers, was waiting up for him. She stirred the fire and busied herself getting him something to eat. When the modest meal was prepared, Mr. Krell very quickly disposed of it, for his experiences had made him hungry. Then he rang the bell, and Mrs. Mathers reappearing, he asked her to remove the dishes, and to her astonishment, requested her to bring materials for a tumbler of hot toddy. The order being obeyed and the toddy mixed, the millionaire drew his chair up before the fire, the toddy at hand, seated himself and relapsed into thought.

"A million! A million at last! Well, long and steadily have I striven for it." Here he began to dangle the heavy bunch of old-fashioned keys he was holding, and, after a few moments thus employed, he mentally came to the conclusion that he had reason to be entirely satisfied with himself. Not that he was at all contented. On the contrary, he already began to plan larger schemes than ever; but up to the present he thought that he had done well, and he expressed his satisfaction and sealed his self-approval with a long sip of toddy.

As he was setting down his glass, the door opened, and a man of about the millionaire's own age entered, uninvited and unannounced. The stranger laid his hat and gloves on the sideboard, deliberately took a chair, placed it opposite Mr. Krell, and calmly seated himself, the millionaire looking on in speechless astonishment. Making himself perfectly at home, the newcomer took the poker and proceeded to stir the fire, after which he sat composedly back in his chair and turned to Mr. Krell with a slight nod of recognition. The latter continued to gaze with astonishment, but seemed unable to speak. Presently the stranger arose, went over to the millionaire and patted him on the shoulder.

"What's the matter, Krell?" he said. "Why don't you welcome me? I'm glad to see you, old fellow. Wish you a merry Christmas, and congratulate you on your good fortune."

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Without waiting for any reply the stranger laughed. Krell was still more astonished at the laugh, for he fancied it resembled his own; but as it was nearly thirty years since he was last guilty of laughing, he was not quite positive as to the resemblance.

The stranger's hands on Krell's shoulders gave him an unpleasant feeling; they had an unearthly chilliness about them. Yet he was unaccountably unable to resent the familiarity, although he struggled hard to do so.

"So you have made a million at last, Krell?" the stranger went on. "Allow me to again congratulate you;" and then he proffered his hand and Krell actually, but timidly, shook it.

"You must be a happy man this evening, Krell," he continued. "Don't you feel rich?" and as the stranger chuckled Krell's indignation increased. He always kept his business profits as secret as possible. Only two hours had elapsed since he was certain of being a millionaire, and he knew Dakins was no more likely to have let it out than he was to fly.

"How the dickens did you know I am worth a million; and who are you?" said Krell angrily.

"Oh, I am familiar with all your affairs, Krell, and yourself also, in the most natural way imaginable; but the nature of that way, and who I am, you must excuse me from telling you just at present. By-and-by you will know all about it." And the stranger laughed quite loudly.

Mr. Krell's usually haughty manner again tried to assert itself, but failed. As he was in the act of rising for the purpose of ejecting the stranger, the latter gently pressed him back in his chair.

"It's no use, Krell," said he, "to order me away. Your conduct at this festive season is quite inhospitable. You must be quiet and let us pass this Christmas Eve together in a social manner." The millionaire, impelled by some strange power, leant back and resigned himself to what might follow.

"So you have really made a million, Krell! What a successful man you are! How pleased you must be with yourself!—aren't you?"

"I suppose," replied Krell with a modest air, "I have no great reason to be dissatisfied with myself."

"Dissatisfied!" ejaculated the stranger, with a tone of surprise, "I should say not. You ought to congratulate yourself. Just think of it! Thirty years in business, commenced on nothing, now worth more than a million, acquired by your unaided exertions! Do you remember the day you first entered old Connell's office, on a salary of thirty pounds for the first year? You were a lad then. And how rich you felt when the first week was paid you! How many golden castles your imagination built out of that! And then your salary was increased yearly, and when it reached four hundred, in a moment of weakness you fell in love!" Here the stranger grinned and nudged Krell in the ribs; but the latter did not appear to see the joke, and looked very uncomfortable.

"What was her name, Krell? Janet Key, wasn't it?"

"Yes," he answered meekly.

"Yes, as I have already said," continued the stranger, "you showed then a phase of weakness, but nobly you overcame it.

"I had never any doubt of your success after the termination of that short struggle; for it was during this love episode you resolved to become rich, and this girl was poor. I admit, as some excuse, that she had what is called beauty and amiability and all that sort of thing. But none of these qualities have any appreciable value in 'prices current,' or on the Stock Exchange. Had you married her, you would have had to support her, and perhaps a family in addition, and these considerations induced you, with Spartan fortitude, to terminate the engagement, and to bear the taunts of her friends that you had broken her heart. Faugh! Broken hearts are frauds! Never saw one. Don't believe in them. Do you, Krell?"

"I assure you I do not," said the millionaire quickly.

"Of course not, Krell, of course not. You acted with perfect consistency; and consistency is not inaptly compared by one of those half-crazy poets, called Shakespeare, to a jewel, on account of its rarety."

"Indeed," said Krell, "I think I have heard of that name before."

"Well, Krell, having surmounted this weakness, you henceforward resolutely set to work for wealth, and you wisely determined that no other object should again impede its attainment. By degrees you became rigidly economical. As you got richer, the world said you became meaner; but I say you got wiser. Contributions to art, science, literature, and all such nonsense were gradually discontinued, and you sagely held that the daily perusal of the money article, the prices current, and the shipping list, was sufficient for any man. In your office you worked early and late; you were keenly sensitive as to how and where money was to be made, and you thus became invaluable to your employer, so that he felt himself obliged to take you into partnership. After that you worked still harder. You made money still faster. You were congratulated on the Exchange and in the street for your business sagacity. Men began to take off their hats to you; for, my friend Krell, piety may quote Scripture on the worthlessness of wealth, and the pulpit may preach that money is the root of all evil, yet they all worship the golden calf.

"Of course, Krell, there are exceptions, even as there are business men weak enough to treat money as of secondary importance, instead of being, as it is you know, the primary object of life. For instance, there is McLennan, a quondam schoolmate of yours—you both commenced business about the same time. But he belongs to this exceptional class. He actually married for love, early in life, and before he was worth two thousand. Neither he nor his wife ever refused themselves any so-called comfort; and as he increased his earnings so he increased his expenditure. Now there are few of these societies dubbed charitable, to which they do not fancy they are bound to contribute, and because a Lazarus now and then blarneys them with a blessing, and a Magdalene figuratively bathes their feet with her tears, I do believe they feel themselves compensated for the money they have thrown away on such worthless objects. It is perfectly shocking, isn't it, Krell?"

"Perfectly shocking!" echoed Krell.

"And what is the consequence of such thriftlessness?" continued the stranger. "Why, this man, with all his opportunities, isn't worth a million, as you are! Think of that, Krell, and take a warning by the example—not that I think, to your credit, *you* need any such warning.

"Even you married at last, Krell—but you married wisely. You got, you know, old Connell's only daughter. She was said to have been neither too amiable nor good-looking, and as the French say, of a certain age; but what sensible man regards ugliness if it be gilded with gold dust, or a bad temper offset by bonds and bank stock? She inherited all her mother's wealth, and you reckoned

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upon getting her father's also. This was your second grand *coup*, your judicious *affaire du cœur*.

"You perceive," said the stranger, grinning again, "I have some little knowledge of French, Mr. Krell."

"Yes," faintly answered Krell, who now assumed an appearance of entire resignation.

"We now," continued the stranger, "reach the period of old Connell's death. From that time you have become the sole manager of the business. Having now attained to large possessions by your own efforts, you naturally saw, more than ever, the folly of giving any of your money away, and accordingly you withdrew your subscriptions from the few charities which you had hitherto deemed politic to aid annually with a guinea. Your life and experience now led you to believe that none had any right to live who could not support themselves, and that misfortune was simply retributive justice and deserved neither help nor pity. Wise Malthusian views! Noble sentiments! Worthy of an old Roman, are these of yours, Krell!

"The next step in your successful career was the death of Mrs. Krell. I know your neighbours said you had no love for her, and that you were rather pleased than otherwise at her departure, as it gave you absolute possession of her property; but they should give you credit for your sincerity, for you certainly did not simulate any great sorrow, if you did not feel it—and I hate hypocrisy! Having neither wife nor children, you now wisely sold your dwelling and purchased a smaller and cheaper one. You curtailed your domestic expenses, reduced the number of your servants to one, resigned the church pew and rented a single sitting. Pious Mr. Krell!" (here the stranger actually winked). "In a word, you acted with your usual wisdom, and were on the road to becoming richer faster than ever.

"But I must now approach the second, and to your credit, the last weak spot in your untarnished career. I mean that affair connected with your sister's husband. Your only sister, or near relative, I believe? By-the-bye, is she living yet?"

"I really am ashamed—er—er—I mean to say," stammered Mr. Krell, "that I believe my clerk, Mr. Dakins, knows. I feel rather cold; shall I put on a little more coal?" he inquired, in a very meek tone.

"Quite unnecessary. Don't be extravagant; we shall be warm enough shortly," said the stranger, as he laughed immoderately.

"To return to that brother-in-law. You actually endorsed an accommodation note for him! You know you did, and don't attempt to deny it. And you lost fifteen thousand by it, and what excuse have you to offer?"

"The fact is—er—er—I made much more than that through him, and I endorsed in the belief that if I could thus keep him from bankruptcy for a few weeks, I should be able to secure some sugar cargoes which I knew were coming to him. But I never endorsed again for anybody, I assure you."

"I know that, Krell. Still, it is a pity you made this mistake. But I must do you the justice to say you gave the fellow no mercy when the collapse took place, and before you secured the sugar. I rather pitied you on that occasion; for you had not only to bear the loss of your money, but also the abuse of his friends because you tried to realise all you could from the estate, and for administering him a little deserved punishment in a debtor's prison. And when you released him, they had the ingratitude to say you did it upon a doctor's certificate that his mind and body were rapidly failing through his incarceration. Your conduct was characterised by consistency and entire impartiality; you nobly refused to allow his relationship to interfere with your uniform treatment of all your defaulting debtors. Therefore, I forgive your endorsation," and the stranger gave Mr. Krell another chill by patting him on the shoulder.

"You quickly recovered the amount of that loss. That was indeed a smart stroke—the foreclosure of Aikens' farm; the 'Homestead' as his family called it. The goose! He—old Aikens I mean—imagined when he gave that mortgage he would have no difficulty in paying the loan, and therefore he complied with your conditions. You knew better, Krell. Ha! ha! And what a jolly row his wife made when you ejected them! How she bawled and appealed to you for a little mercy, as she called it, for her poor, helpless children! Unreasonable woman! but all women are alike in that respect. You must have realised a handsome profit on that transaction."

"Yes," said Krell, "I did pretty well on that affair."

"And not only in that case," said the stranger, "henceforward everything you touched, Midas-like, turned into gold. And although some uncharitable people called you by hard names, and even children would be rude enough to run away, in seeming fear, at your approach, you were sustained by the becoming humility of your debtors who were slow in their payments; by the entreaties to you of joint stock promoters to subscribe and become a director, and by the rapid rise of the Squeeze-'em Bank stock as soon as you were elected the manager."

Suddenly Mr. Krell arose, and in agitation exclaimed: "Are not those bells tolling a death?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the stranger, "those are Christmas chimes! merry, merry Christmas chimes! Why, Krell, I fear you must be feeling unwell. You appear to be excited. Courage, Krell, be yourself and show no weakness. Allow me to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!" And here the stranger again shook Krell by the hand, the latter wincing slightly under the operation.

"I have not," said Krell, "been in the habit of regarding these seasons with any particular favour, as their observance entails a sad waste of time."

"I know that," said the other; "the custom is a superstitious relic of the dark ages. Day is given man to work only; we work to make money; *ergo*, to make money every day in the year should be the sole end of man! This truth aught to be incorporated into every church catechism."

"Very true indeed," said Krell. "I have always striven to act according to that excellent precept."

"I know you have," said the stranger, "and on that account I am having this genial chat with you; and you will be appropriately rewarded, Krell—you take my word for it. But we are digressing. Let us resume the thread of our discourse.

"A recent book-writer, I am told—for, like yourself, I never waste time in reading any book except an account book—has asserted genius to be synonymous with industry, and that an undeviating, life-long effort in the attainment of an object is the sign of true genius. This peculiarity, he says, creates Alexanders and Napoleons. If this be true, Krell, then you are a hero! You have this element of genius, and although some win their trophies in the battle-field—the broken lives (excuse the phrase, Krell) made by you in your counting-house are equally deserving fame. In fine, your course, on the

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whole, is a wiser one. And yet they say you are unhappy and heartless. Let me disprove the assertion; Krell, I will take out your heart and show it to you."

"Pray don't!" cried Krell, with a terrified countenance.

"Don't be afraid. The operation will be perfectly painless."

The stranger then placed his hand on Mr. Krell's left side, and, without any difficulty, and apparently without any sense of feeling on Krell's part, he removed a substance in shape and size resembling a heart, but apparently petrified. Touching the top with a finger, a lid suddenly opened, and from within he extracted bonds, mortgages, deeds of sale, promissory notes, bills of exchange, certificates of stock, in large numbers; and in bulk far beyond the seeming capacity of the article.

"Who says now," cried the stranger to Krell, "you have no heart? Here is a jolly one, though it is a little hard and dry; and full of riches, though it be lacking that sentimental and unprofitable stuff, figuratively called 'the milk of human kindness.'"

"Spare me! Do stop, for Heaven's sake!" cried Krell. "I feel so cold and sick. Leave me, and I will seek my sister and her family—I will befriend them—I will make restitution to all whom I have oppressed—I will aid the poor—I will resign all I have. Oh! heavens, who are these? There's Aikens again! I thought you were dead! Here, I'll give you back that farm—and there is Swandon! Don't say again I ruined you and broke your wife's heart. I'll give you back all I took. And there—is—is—Heaven have mercy on me!—have——"

"Too late, Mr. Krell," interposed the stranger, "too late, too late!"

* * * * *

The papers on Christmas morning contained the following paragraph: "We have to record the sudden death of Mr. Krell, a wealthy and successful merchant, a director of several joint stock companies, and the worthy manager of the Squeeze-'em Bank. About midnight, his housekeeper was awakened by the sound of a heavy fall in the dining-room, which was immediately succeeded by the howling of the house dog. On reaching the room she saw her employer's body stretched on the hearthrug, apparently lifeless. A physician was quickly called, and he pronounced Mr. Krell to be dead. An inquest will be held to-morrow. It is surmised that his death was occasioned by disease of the heart!"

JOHN POPHAM.

FORTUNES MADE OUT OF BOOKS.

EVERY year some book is published which takes the public by storm, and brings to its author, not only fame, but fortune almost beyond the dreams of avarice.

To mention only two books of this kind, "Trilby," and "The Christian" realised vast sums for their creators, and, for a time at least, a kind of mania seemed to have seized the reading public, who could talk of nothing else but these stories.

In the United States, during the past six months, a similar craze has been witnessed in connection with two wonderful books of a religious character. These volumes, "Quo Vadis," and "Titus," are stories of the time of Christ and the Apostles. The former is by a Polish writer, "Henryk Sienkieviecz," and has been translated into English, whilst the latter is by a lady, Mrs. Florence Kingsley.

Both authors were practically unheard of before, but in a moment, as it were, they have become famous by their latest works.

There is always a certain fascination in a story of the early Christians and the terrible sufferings they endured at the hands of the Cæsars. "Quo Vadis" and "Titus," for some inexplicable reason, are almost unknown in this country, but a powerful story of the Domitian Persecution, which will bring in as a prominent character the last of the apostles, St. John, is about to be published as a serial in *The Sunday Reader*.

The story is entitled "In Cæsar's Name," and has been specially written by a very clever and popular author. It will, without doubt, take a foremost place amongst works of its kind, and every reader of this journal should be sure and read "In Cæsar's Name."

The first chapters will be published in *The Sunday Reader* of January 29th. The story is splendidly and powerfully illustrated by an artist who makes a speciality of ancient scenes, and who has for a long time been reading up the history, manners, and dresses of the period. It is, without doubt, the most powerful story of the period of the Cæsars ever written.

A GREAT SCHEME.

HOW TO GET ANY BOOK YOU WANT.

WE are constantly receiving complaints from readers that we do not devise competitions in which everybody can enter.

It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

Every week we shall give away half-a-dozen books.

All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

All applications to be addressed to "BOOKS," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please let me have: **S. S.**

Book.....

Price.....

Name.....

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THIS morning I received a letter from Ruth Clayton announcing her engagement to Charlie Everett. Dear me, I begin to feel like—I was going to say an old maid—but I will lessen the blow by using the term bachelor-girl; that certainly sounds more self-respecting and less resigned, for even at twenty-five there is room for hope, and then it is true that I don't look my age. Sometimes I feel that I am scarcely honest when I allow people to think that I am still in my teens, but if they will be so stupid why should I enlighten them?

When that dear boy, Tom, left, I told him his case was hopeless, that I could never be more than a friend to him. I did not even use the time-honoured sister ruse. I might have told him that I was his senior by three or four years and thus have put an end to his infatuation, but I couldn't bear to shatter his hopes in that particular way, and he has gone back to town cherishing in his heart a seventeen or eighteen year old ideal of me. I drove over to the station with him that last evening. These country places are very propitious for flirtations; he held my hand a moment in farewell and called me "little one." I really felt like a fraud, but what a blow it would have been to him to have announced, in cold blood, that I was twenty-five. His letters are tenderly regretful, and ring with hope notwithstanding my firmness. I have written once, but think I shall not do so again. If we meet in town this season, some of my friends—the Cooks or Blanchard girls—will doubtless tell him my exact age, or perhaps in the fulness of their hearts, add a year or two; so I will let him down easy now, and he will have less to blame me for when he does find out how he has been deceived.

Well, to return to Ruth and Charlie, they will doubtless be happy together; she is a sweet girl, one of those prettily dependent creatures, calculated to make a man proud of his own self reliance, and conscious of the importance of himself in particular and mankind in general. I always thought they would make a match of it some day. He is not brilliant, but true and manly, and, I presume, very much in love. I remember as long ago as last summer he preferred Ruth to me. We were all on the Clayton's yacht together, and he was by far the best-looking man aboard, so I thought him fair game, and tried all my wiles, but he was proof against them, and returned after each of my attacks to Ruth's side. At the time I was a little huffy, for I was obliged to turn my attention to one whom I thought a rather elderly man, of not very promising appearance.

I did not know William then as I do now. William Holbrooke then seemed old, his grave, quiet manner and iron-grey hair gave him an appearance of age which deceived me; he is really only ten years older than I am.

My face burns now when I recall the manner in which I received his kindly warning the day we anchored in Bleak Harbour. It was perilously rough, but I insisted upon going into port in our little boat. I came out of the cabin attired in my freshest and most becoming yachting costume, and as I stepped on deck, I saw a look of surprise come over the faces of the party who sat lazily watching the waves and speculating as to the results of the storm.

"Miss Knowlton, you surely will not venture out on this rough sea in that tiny boat. The clouds are growing more threatening every moment; it seems risky even for the sailors to go ashore. The wind is rising rapidly, and if we have a storm, we need your gay presence aboard ship to keep up our spirits," said Mr. Holbrooke.

"Poor grandpa," I replied, "if you are afraid, I am not; perhaps when I am your age I shall be nervous. But now I am off. Who will go with me to brave the stormy deep?"

Mr. Holbrooke's bronze face whitened for an instant, and I saw that my rudeness had hurt him, but prompted by my evil genius (I'm sure I have one), I answered his next entreaty to stay aboard in the same discourteous way.

"Katherine, listen to me," he said earnestly; "you are fool-hardy. Whatever motive prompts you to risk your life on this rough water is not worthy of you; if you care not for yourself, you should think of others; why cause them such unnecessary anxiety?"

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"By what right do you presume to undertake a surveillance of me?" I asked, drawing myself up haughtily, and flashing a look of defiance into his grave eyes. "If Mr. Clayton, our host, does not object, why should you?"

I knew so well Mr. Clayton's indifference!

"I beg your pardon, Miss Knowlton, for the interference I've been guilty of. You are right; of course, I have no right, but since you are determined to go, I shall accompany you, with your permission."

By this time the party on the deck were all agog at our heated discussion; and suddenly becoming conscious of the food for gossip we were furnishing, I repressed the cold declination that came to my lips, and bowed my acceptance of his offer.

I had friends staying at the White Shore Hotel, so there was no occasion for a chaperone, even if any of the married ladies could have been induced to risk their lives in the frail boat in which we were to breast the waves. Two of the sailors, brave fellows that they were, let down the boat, and, with a hasty kiss to Ruth and her mother, we were off.

As soon as we were well under way I said: "Mr. Holbrooke, why did you insist upon coming; I should not have minded the trip with our good sailors."

"I am very sorry if my presence is disagreeable; please forgive me, Miss Knowlton, but I could not let you without protection, and I seemed to be the most available."

I looked at William Holbrooke proudly, about to scorn his protection, but something in his firm, kind gaze, saved me from perpetrating any more ungracious remarks. An instant afterwards the boat gave a fearful lurch, I shut my eyes, but knew instinctively that we were capsizing, and in another moment I found myself submerged in the cold, terrible water. It is all too horrible to relate; it's like a nightmare to me now. The only thing I remember distinctly is the sense of security that came over me when I felt William's strong arm round me—what strength he had! Holding me with one arm, and clinging tenaciously to the overturned boat with the other, I heard him say: "Hold on to me tight, Katherine," but I seemed to be in a dream, the waves rolled over my face, and I made no effort, but sank into unconsciousness.

That evening I awoke in the White Shore Hotel. Dear Mrs. Graham was bending over my pillow, and there was a lovely bunch of my favourite Katherine Mermet roses on the table by my side. I put my hand to my head and reassured myself. What a blessing is naturally curly hair! I always feel myself at such an advantage, for, whether wet or wind-blown, I know my chestnut locks are falling into soft, becoming ringlets, and the peace of mind that knowledge gives me imparts a bright, care-free expression that is unknown to the slaves of the curling iron.

"How do you feel, dear girl?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"I think I am all right, except that I am painfully tired and sore; but tell me how I came here? Is it a miracle? The last thing I recall was making up my mind that I had done with all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; and isn't it strange, I don't remember regretting them at all?"

"The doctor said you were to be kept quiet, dear, but of course you won't rest until you know that all were saved. The lifeboat picked you all up and brought you into the hotel. We saw them capsize from the porch. I wonder that my hair is not white, and if I had known it was you, madcap, I am sure it would have been; as it was, I suffered terribly." So on, *ad finitum*, she continued, chiding me and caressing me over and over again, regardless of the doctor's injunctions, while I lay calm and happy in the assurance that William Holbrooke was saved. I had not dared to ask for him, so fearful was I that my mad foolishness had brought him to a watery grave

During the three long, dreary days that I lay in the little white room in the hotel, unable to continue my voyage on the yacht, I had ample time for reflection, and I devoted most of it, much against my will, to William Holbrooke. I could not keep him out of my mind, though he had not come near me or sent any word, and I was too proud to ask about him. I remembered all his gentle kindnesses to me, and recalled with a smile his grave, quaint humour. The strength and sweetness of his character burst upon me with new light, and I looked back upon my rude behaviour with painful regret. His silence showed me very plainly what he thought of me, and I found myself in a state of abjection, hitherto unknown.

I heard when I rejoined the yachting party (how good they all were to me, notwithstanding my late escapade) that Mr. Holbrooke found telegrams awaiting him at the hotel at Bleak Harbour, which called him back to London, immediately, and he subsequently sailed for the Cape. I thought it was unforgiving of him not to have left me a good-bye. However we took aboard a party of college boys at Margate, and I was very much occupied during the rest of the time.

This morning's post brought me news of Ruth's engagement, and in company with her letter was one from William Holbrooke. He has returned from abroad, and writes me he is coming down here to-night. He says that he has tried to forget me, as he felt the hopelessness of his love, for did I not take every means of showing him my indifference!

Ah, me! if I had only discovered the note to which he refers, in the Mermet roses! I might have known that only he would have remembered which flowers I loved best. But I never found the missive that he sent by those sweet messengers. I presume the chambermaid edified the servants' hall with the words that should have been sacred to me. No wonder he thought me cold and heartless, but he says he is determined to ask me face to face. When I answer Ruth's letter I shall, *D.V.*, have an engagement of my own to announce.

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FOR PARTICULARS SEE THE CURRENT NUMBER OF *PEARSON'S WEEKLY.*

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MISS MERRYVIEW'S SLUMMING.

It was not a pleasant sight that met Miss Merryview's eyes as she climbed three flights of uncertain stairs, avoiding dirty, squalling children who were tumbling up and down, and trying to stifle the undeniable odour of beer and cabbage which floated out to her on every landing. Her rich furs and aristocratic person seemed sadly out of place, but with the determination born of ignorance she pressed on until she gained the fourth floor of the disreputable-looking tenement to which her mistaken motives but thoroughly good intentions had led her. The room before which she paused was little better than the rest. There were the same broken chairs and cracked window-panes, but the bed was made up smoothly, the floor was not littered with trash, and no decided odour met her delicate nostrils. She hesitated at the half-open door, knocked, but received no reply. A second knock brought no response, so she advanced timidly, looking about rather fearfully, but still preserving her determined air.

"This looks like a good place," she observed. "That is, a good bad place. I wonder if anybody is in? Oh, I don't like slumming a bit. I never would have come here if the girls didn't want me to come. Well, I won't come again, for I don't think it's a bit funny. The old woman downstairs was horribly rude when I offered to make her some tea—and I'm sure I've done it very beautifully every Thursday afternoon this winter. She wouldn't even take a flower. Oh, I wish somebody would come!"

Growing impatient, she rises and walks about the room, loosening the furs at her throat and displaying a rich diamond brooch. The touch of it startles her.

"Oh, I wonder if that's safe? Would anybody—I've heard awful tales——" She is hastily closing her cloak and almost preparing to go, when a sound makes her turn to face a girl who stands in the open door, looking at her questioningly. The fair intruder is not at ease, for the newcomer holds herself with a certain uncouth dignity, and her heavy features are full of strength. The two women are almost of an age, but the difference in their appearance is almost pitiful. One fair, exquisitely dressed, and with the happy, complacent face of those daughters of fortune who have never known what it is to want for anything; the other old before her time, with gaunt features which tell their tale of poverty, perhaps hunger; eyes which hint at tragedy, and rough garments which have done service for several seasons.

Miss Merryview advances with some embarrassment. "I—ah—good-morning. The door was open, and I knocked several times. Nobody answered—so I came in." This last rather lamely, but with that engaging smile which never fails to win a friend.

"Will you sit down?" the other girl asks gravely.

"Thank you;" and Miss Merryview seats herself in the doubtful looking chair nearest her.

"Did you want to see me?" inquires the girl. Then, noticing her visitor's hesitation, she continues: "Dad is not home, of course. Grandmother's drunk again, and the children are at the shop. So would I be, but I was discharged last week because I wouldn't kiss the foreman." All this was said in a dull, spiritless tone, utterly devoid of any emotion.

"What?" gasps Miss Merryview in horror.

"That's what I said," replies the girl doggedly. "They all call me a fool for it; but I won't have Tim O'Neill coming round me with his drunken eyes and dirty hands. I hate him"—her colour rising and her voice full of emotion now—"I hate them all." She begins to cough on account of her excitement.

Miss Merryview rises and speaks sympathetically. "My poor girl. Can't I help you in some way?"

The girl looks at her keenly. "So you *are* one of them missionaries after all? I thought at first you was a lady."

Miss Merryview makes a gesture of deprecation. She feels strangely ill at ease with this daughter of the tenements.

"I——" she begins.

"You needn't say anything to apologise," interrupts the girl. "I'm used to it," wearily. "They come down here every once in a while to have fun—'slumming' they call it. They come into our houses, uninvited. They ask impertinent questions. They say 'My poor girl, I want to help you;' some leave tracts and tell me to trust in God. What right have they to come here? What good do they do? The women only come once; the men come again—and they don't bring tracts."

Miss Merryview shudders.

"You had better stay at home," continues the girl recklessly. "Stay in your pretty gold cage like a beautiful bird. We are in a cage, too, a cage that is a trap—a rat-trap."

Miss Merryview at lasts takes the initiative. "I wish I could say something to you," she murmurs in her

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sweet, shy way. "I want to and yet I cannot somehow. Miss—miss——"

"Maggie," mutters the girl.

"Won't you take these flowers, Maggie?" unpinning some lilies-of-the-valley from her breast and handing them to the girl who is struggling to strangle another cough.

Maggie looks at her in surprise, and then takes the flowers, gazing at them thoughtfully. She lifts her head and looks at Miss Merryview in the face.

"You are not like the rest," she says slowly.

"I wish you would let me do something for you, Maggie. Can you sew? We need a seamstress at the house."

"I couldn't make such things as you wear, miss."

"Well, then, couldn't you——"

"No! don't say anything more. I must stay here. I'm needed to look after the house. Grandmother's not fit to do it. Then, the children and dad!"

"Your mother?"

Maggie rises abruptly and walks to the window. "Five years ago dad pushed her downstairs. He was drunk; it killed her."

Miss Merryview gives an exclamation of mingled horror and sympathy.

"Oh, you've come into a nice family," says the girl with a bitter little laugh. "I told you you'd better go home. What can you know of us and our suffering? We live in another world. No sun shines in our lives. The clouds hide it. I am no older than you Yet look at me. I've been to night school, and had books from the library. I wish I hadn't, they taught me too much. I wish I was like the rest, for then I wouldn't care. I could stand this life here at home though—I'm often hungry, but that doesn't matter; I'm in rags, but that doesn't matter; there's a great pain in my chest, but that doesn't matter—nothing would matter to me if he would only come back."

"He! Who?"

"Who? The man I love—the only man I ever did or could love. But he left me. He came from your people." She turns fiercely on Miss Merryview. "Yes, that is what you do for us. That is why we hate you and your people and your money."

Miss Merryview is trembling, but she walks straight to Maggie. "You must not get so excited, Maggie. It it is not good for you. Come," leading her to the table, "sit down." She puts her white hand on the girl's brown one, and speaks gently. "I hope you do not hate me."

The girl bursts into tears. Miss Merryview wipes them away with her dainty white handkerchief.

"No," she sobs; "you are so kind—I love you."

"And now, Maggie, tell me. Why does he not come back, this—this man?"

"Because he's going to be married. I read it in the paper this morning." She speaks sullenly again in a dull, unemotional voice.

"Who is he?"

"No, I'll not tell you. I'll be true to him even if he did leave me. I'll never betray him."

"But, Maggie——"

"I tell you I won't!"

Miss Merryview notices a newspaper on the table and picks it up. "Very well, then, I can see for myself."

Maggie, who has buried her face in her hands, hears the rustle of paper and springs up wildly.

"No! No! Let it alone. You shan't see it." She tries to snatch the paper from Miss Merryview.

"Why, you silly child! There are a dozen announcements. How could I tell? There is even my own marriage notice."

"Your own?"

"Yes, here, the fourth one," pointing it out to Maggie.

Maggie reads with blanched face and frightened eyes.

Before Miss Merryview observes her, a noise is heard from the outside, and she walks towards the door, while Maggie stares at the paper gasping: "*Her!*"

The noise outside increases. It is Mike O'Donnell, Maggie's father, climbing the stairs heavily. His voice comes in at the door before his burly person presents itself to view.

"Shure I'll have none of them in my house. They're a blatherin' pack of liars. The cursed aristocrats!" Here he enters, red and reeling with drink.

Miss Merryview runs towards Maggie, who pushes her behind with a protective gesture.

"Father!" calls the girl in her clear young voice. This displeases Mike immediately, for he knows that Maggie only calls him "father" when he is drunk enough to merit reproof.

"I tell ye, I'll have none of 'em. Shure and didn't they turn me away from me wurk, and then come sneakin' and pryin' round an honest man's house. An' you a harbourin' of 'em here. Ungrateful hussy! Git out, I say!"

In his drunken frenzy he has drawn a pistol and waves it threateningly.

Miss Merry view screams. Maggie advances tohim.

"Father!" she cries again warningly.

"I say I won't have it, and you can go too—a nice daughter ye are, a turnin' up yer nose at Tim O'Neill. Git out!"

He reels towards her, looking, however at Miss Merryview. Maggie steps in front of the latter with arms outstretched. In his excitement, having worked up to what he thinks a righteous indignation, the man waves his arms, muttering curses and brandishing the pistol. The pistol explodes and Maggie falls to the floor. He drops the weapon immediately, sobered by the sight. Miss Merryview kneels by the girl's side, speaking frantically.

"Maggie! Maggie! Are you hurt? Speak to me!"

She raises the girl's head on her arm. The man falls on his knees, blubbering. "Maggie! Maggie! Shure I didn't mane to hurt ye."

The girl opens her eyes and looks up at Miss Merryview.

"I don't feel hurt," she says faintly, "but everything seems so queer. I fancy I'm dying. I'm not sorry—it isn't hard—on account of him."

"Oh, Maggie, don't!" moans the distressed Miss Merryview. "Why don't you go for a doctor?" she cries to the stupefied man and the people who have gathered about the door. "Quick!"

"No," says Maggie weakly. "It's no use. My—my flowers!"

Miss Merryview hands them from the table, laying them on the girl's breast and in her hands. She bends over to catch the faint whisper.

"You were good to me and I love you; but go home; don't—don't do any more slumming!"

Her head sinks on Miss Merryview's arm, her limbs relax, a peace steals over her white face, and her breath goes out with a soft sigh: "It's for the best and I'm glad."

BEATRICE STURGIS.

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AN INDIAN RAID.

THERE are not many people in this country who can say that they have had a brush with Indians—with the noble red man we hear so much about. But then, there are very few who have been such a roving stone as I have.

In my youthful days, when I read with bated breath the stories of Fenimore Cooper and others, my soul yearned for Indian adventures and narrow escapes from the scalping knife. In my flights of fancy, I remember that I always escaped unharmed. But when I did have an experience of the actual thing, it fell short of what I had imagined; in other words, it wasn't so pleasant. I only had one experience, and I cannot honestly say that I am sorry that my acquaintance with the redskins was not more extensive. It occurred while I was assisting (as a soldier) in the construction of a telegraph line.

To get the telegraph poles for the line from Fort Johnson to the railway, or at least for the northern fifteen miles of it, we had to get over on Pine Mountain, ten miles from the fort. As the poles were cut they were slid down the mountain side and then drawn along the line by a span of mules or carried on men's shoulders. The work was hard enough for a gang of lumbermen, but it was made worse by the peril from Indians. While there was a peace treaty in force, no Indian who had a chance to pick off a soldier or settler felt bound to observe it. Therefore, when it became the turn of company G to send out a sergeant and six men to cut, distribute, and set up five miles of poles, the colonel at Fort Johnson warned us to be on the look-out for trouble, and to neglect no precaution for adding to our safety.

We went into camp at the head of a narrow valley, close up against the precipitous side of a hill, and were safe from attack except by the front. As it was fine midsummer weather, we made a foundation of rock, and then erected a hut of poles and brushwood, and in a day or two we were snug enough. For the first four days there was nothing to create alarm. One man was left in camp to act as sentinel and cook, and the other five were more or less scattered, as they cut and distributed the poles. The sergeant took charge of the mules and the hauling, and this work took him beyond our support much of the time. He was a veteran Indian fighter, however, brave as a lion, and had no fear.

On the morning of the fifth day, while he was returning with the mules after hauling a pole to a spot two miles away, a party of ten Indians suddenly confronted him. They were led by a sub-chief named Little Bear, who was a frequent visitor at the fort, and well known to all the soldiers. During the war, which had closed only a few months before, this sub-chief had shot and scalped a corporal near the fort; and after the treaty he had come swaggering into the post with the scalplock attached to his belt, an action which so provoked Sergeant Milton that he snatched the ghastly trophy away, and offered to go outside and fight Little Bear in any manner desired. When the Indian demanded his trophy it was refused, and he left the post vowing vengeance.

Since then they hadn't met until now, and the soldier had but to look into the eyes of the redskin to see the pleasure he felt at thus finding his enemy alone and seemingly helpless. As the meeting took place the sergeant backed up against a mass of rock, got his carbine and revolver ready for shooting, and was so cool and determined that the Indians were awed.

They were anxious to kill him, but had only just arrived in the neighbourhood, and did not know how many men he had behind him or how near some of them might be. For the first ten minutes they were determined on a row, yet the sergeant's quiet way acted as a bluff, and they finally drew off. Before going, however, Little Bear said to him:

"When my father and other chiefs signed the treaty of peace, I told them that I would be against it until I had killed you. There is no war, but I shall not go into the fort again until I can wear your scalp at my belt."

The sergeant replied that if his scalp were wanted it was a good time to take it, but the Indians had other plans in view and left him!

When the sergeant returned to camp he related the incident, and for the next three or four days one of us accompanied him on his trips, and signals were arranged by which we might quickly come together in case of need; but nothing was heard of the Indian.

One afternoon we were cutting poles nearly a mile from camp, leaving a man named Brisbane to act as cook. He had been instructed to fire his musket in case he saw Indians, and having heard nothing from him, we started for camp at about five o'clock with a feeling that all was well.

We reached camp to find the man missing. His musket had been left behind, and nothing about camp had been disturbed. For an hour we expected his return any moment, thinking he had wandered away, but when night came and passed we were sure that the Indians had had something to do with his disappearance.

They had. Instead of being watchful and vigilant, the man had carelessly wandered down into the larger valley in search of berries, with no weapons, and Little Bear's band had pounced upon him and carried him into the hills and at first decided to torture him. That idea was given up, however, that they might make him a messenger to capture the rest of us. Why, after Brisbane was captured, the redskins did not enter and destroy our camp was a puzzle, but as a matter of fact,

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they hastened away, and we heard nothing of them until about sunrise next morning.

We were about to set out in search of our missing man when he appeared at the mouth of the valley with an Indian beside him. He had been stripped of all clothing, and the blood of a hare had been daubed all over him until he seemed to have been wounded in a dozen places. The Indian with him could understand English very well, and Brisbane had doubtless been told just what to say.. As our attention was attracted he called out:

"Sergeant Milton, the Indians captured me yesterday and I have a message for you. They say that if you will come out and surrender yourself they will permit the rest of us to return to the fort, but all must leave their guns behind. If you refuse to do this, they will attack the camp and wipe you all out. Little Bear has been joined by twenty more bucks, and you have no show."

"Jim!" called the sergeant, when he had recovered somewhat from his surprise, "are you talking dead square?"

"No!" was the reply. "The force is the same as yesterday with five on top, who joined last night. There are six of you, and you can stand them off for a week."

The Indian beside the captive pulled his arm and muttered threats, evidently suspicious of his words, which he could not fully understand, but Brisbane continued:

"Let 'em do with me as they will, but do you hold the camp. Their idea is to wipe us all out. You might shoot the brute beside me, but there are two others behind that bush over there who would do for me. You won't surrender. I am to tell Little Bear that and let him do his worst."

"But how can we save you, Jim?" shouted the sergeant.

"There is no way. Make ready for a row, and fight to the last. It serves me right for not being on the watch yesterday. Good-bye, boys, and do the best you can, and tell 'em at the fort how it was with me."

He turned and was soon hidden from view, and we at once began preparations for defence. As I said at the start, we could be approached only from the front, and all six of us felt ourselves a match for double the number of Indians we might look for.

For half-an-hour we heard nothing more from the redskins. Then, from a point down the valley hidden from our sight, came wails, and cries of pain, and distress, as though the soldier were being tortured. Our first thought was to rush out, but after listening more closely all declared that the tones were those of an Indian, and that the plan was to draw us into an ambush. When it was found useless, the cries ceased.

An hour later Brisbane appeared on the same spot as before, having the same Indian with him. At the bidding of his guard he shouted:

"Little Bear has been joined by twenty more warriors, and unless the sergeant surrenders himself all will be killed. You are to have an hour in which to make up your minds."

"Are you prevaricating, Jim?" asked the sergeant in reply, using a term which he knew the Indian would not understand.

"The biggest kind!" shouted the captive, "divide the number of a full company of soldiers by ten and you have the right figure. Don't be humbugged into a surrender."

"But what will become of you if we don't?"

"Makes no difference. Be prepared for a rush and give 'em blazes!"

The soldier spoke so fast that the Indian could not follow him, but suspecting something wrong, the Indian led him away.

We pitied Brisbane, but could do nothing for him. We had no thought of surrender and we were sure we could beat off any attack.

We lay waiting and ready until close upon noon, when Brisbane suddenly appeared at the mouth of the valley, and running towards our camp at the top of his speed. Behind him were the Indians, who had planned it that way, thinking we would hesititate to fire for fear of killing our comrade. That was just what happened, and but for a strange thing the band would have been upon us before a gun was fired.

Thirty or forty feet down the valley was a shaky spot in the ground. We had noticed it in walking over the spot, but apprehended no danger. As the Indians charged they came in a solid body, and on reaching the spot the earth suddenly gave way, and all went out of sight in an instant, while Brisbane fell forward, clung to the edge of the hollow for a moment, and then disappeared.

A crust of earth about thirty feet square had given way, and when we rushed out it was to look down into a hole thirty feet deep, and see the Indians at the bottom of it.

Two were badly hurt; Brisbane's neck was broken as he landed at the bottom. No body of Indians ever received a greater surprise, and all their thoughts of fighting were gone at once. We saw plainly enough that the roots of several trees growing on either side of the valley had stretched across and interlaced to hold up the earth over what had once been a natural hollow. It must have been years and years before the crust was thick enough to hold up a man, but it had finally become strong enough for that, though not for the weight of eleven men rushing upon it.

The Indians looked upon it as a trap set for their destruction by the great Manitou, and were frightened into helplessness for a time.

The only way for them to get out was to be hauled out. We got the ropes, and first drew up the body of our comrade. This we looked carefully over, and found that the poor fellow had not been gashed or tortured, as we all feared would be the case.

Next we made them send up their rifles, tomahawks, and knives, and their own dead and injured. One redskin had a leg broken and a bad scalp wound, and the other had a shoulder dislocated and an arm broken at the wrist. When all were out, the living were commanded to pick up their wounded and be off, and even the defiant sub-chief was so humbled and awe-stricken that he obeyed without a murmur.

The sergeant warned them that if ever seen again in the neighbourhood they would be shot on sight. Not even a knife was restored to them, and they bore off their wounded and appeared only too glad to escape.

The two dead Indians were dropped back into the pit, while the body of Brisbane was taken to the fort that evening for a soldier's burial.

It was expected that Little Bear would demand a terrible revenge for the defeat and humiliation, but, as a matter of fact, the working parties did not catch sight of another Indian that summer, nor was there ever a claim made for the arms we took from the band.

H. PETERS.

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Professor Whirlwind.

HE was a majestic, taciturn man, with a beardless, bloodless face, and a massive head, entirely bald except for a tuft of coal-black hair just above the nape of the neck. What his real name was I never knew, but, for reasons that will appear later, I always think of him as Professor Whirlwind.

Our acquaintance came about on board the ocean steamer *Teutonic*. For several days I had noticed this strange figure pacing up and down the deck, often casting swift glances seaward and muttering to himself.

One morning, as I lay in my steamer chair watching this curious proceeding, I was astonished to see the Professor stop short, his head thrust forward and inclined to one side as if listening intently, while his gaze was riveted on a funnel-shaped cloud that had suddenly loomed up in the horizon.

For a moment he stood like this, as rigid as a statue, his eyes, ordinarily dull and filmy, flashing forth a lurid light. The next instant he threw up his hands convulsively, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, and tottered backwards like a drunken man. Fearing an accident, I sprang to aid him. But by an effort he recovered himself, and, wheeling about, walked hastily away.

As he turned, something fell from his person and rolled swiftly across the deck. Another moment, and the object would have disappeared into the sea, had I not caught it up out of harm's way. It was an oval case of gold, whose spring, broken by the jar, had started open, disclosing the miniature portrait of what seemed, to my momentary glimpse, a very young girl, with the delicate beauty of a flower. Closing the case, with the feeling that I had involuntarily intruded upon another's private affairs, I hurried after the portrait's owner. I found him in his stateroom, his eyes carefully scanning the floor, apparently searching for the miniature case, which I now produced. As he grasped it, with a sigh of relief, the spring once more started open, and, though this time I looked away, I felt that the Professor divined that its contents were known to me. At any rate, after a moment's hesitation, he began:

"Very likely you were amazed at my actions on deck and think me a coward, if not a maniac. And then this picture—you must have wondered what relation could exist between that beautiful young girl and one like myself. But since you have seen—well, do you care to hear a story, a true story, though one that staggers human belief?"

"Certainly," I said, "if you are sure that you care to confide in a stranger."

I had observed that while I was speaking, his eyes, instead of looking into mine, were fixed upon my mouth. It was not, however, till he touched his ear significantly that I knew he was deaf and could understand my speech only by watching my lips.

"Well," he continued, "I had two companions in my strange adventure; you have seen a portrait of one; let me show you a photograph of the other."

Rummaging in his trunk, he drew forth a photograph, cabinet size, of a very queer-looking biped, which, on a close inspection, I saw was a rooster. The curious thing about it, however, was that the fowl had been photographed in what an artist's model, perhaps, would term "the altogether," there was not a feather on it. And yet it seemed alive, and stood with its neck stretched forward, its bare wings partly raised, and its bill open, as if in the act of crowing lustily.

I laughed heartily.

"You would not have been so merry," the Professor said gravely, "if you had met him when I did. He was not then the swashbuckler that he appears in this photograph, which was taken a short while after the eventful day on which I fell in with him—the seventeenth of June of the year eighteen hundred and eighty-two.

"At that time I was living in the States, and was deeply in love with the most beautiful girl that I have ever known, the original of the portrait that you found. Oh, you need not smile, for I was then a good-looking, athletic fellow of but twenty-five years. Well, for some reason my love-making didn't progress. Alice seemed to care for me, but her parents, though they showed no opposition, somehow always made it impossible for me to see her alone. It was as though they suspected my purpose and were determined that I should have no chance to speak to Alice of my real feelings.

"But I was as determined as they. So, when the professional aeronaut, Lugui—you remember the *furore* he created—came to town with his monster balloon, a scheme came into my head that I thought would enable me to be alone with Alice.

"Lugui had found it profitable to let the public take short rides in the air, the balloon being attached for this purpose by a rope, several hundred feet long, to a windlass on the ground, worked by two strong men, who would allow the rope to unwind, and the daring passengers slowly to ascend.

"Now, my plan was simply to induce Alice to slip away and take a ride in the great air-ship with me, providing against the presence of other passengers by paying for the entire five seats."

"And the scheme succeeded?" I asked, as the Professor paused.

"Yes," he said gravely, "up to the moment when we began our ascent. But, just as the aeronaut's assistants had obeyed his signal, the balloon began to pitch like a ship in a storm, wrenched the handle of the windlass from the grasp of the men, and then—the earth bounded away in a succession of rapid leaps, like a jack-rabbit, and, before we could realise that the rope had snapped asunder like thread, we were so far from land that the shouting of the excited multitude sounded to us like the slumbrous drone of insects.

"'Well,' I exclaimed, secretly glad that the parting of the rope had prolonged our companionship, 'this may prove a longer journey than we bargained for. Shall I pull the valve-line and descend? Not frightened, are you?'

"'No,' she answered, laughing; 'a little higher. This is glorious!'

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"As for me, to be alone with her in the quiet regions was Heaven itself. Scarcely feeling the motion of our ship, up we glided through the blue silence, till the earth, covered with transparent mist like a veil of golden silk, began to assume a concave appearance; and, at last, our balloon, glowing like a golden planet, seemed to hang at the centre of the visible universe. Below us lay the earth—another sky—its horizon looming up to meet the upper bowl of the heavens. Around us slept an ocean of blue, its serenity unbroken save towards the west, where masses of clouds softened the fierceness of the sun, and threw a mellow radiance over all. Poised in mid-air, our balloon motionless, except for a dreamy swaying to and fro, the deep silence unbroken save by the soft Æolian murmurs of the wind in the rigging, we dwelt in a world all our own. Hand clasped in hand, we gave ourselves up to blissful dreams.

"Suddenly there was a rush of warm air from below that sent our balloon careering through space. Dense mists gathered over the earth, and a shrill wind, tearing the mists into long streamers, drove them northward, where they banked themselves in a towering mass of gloom against the sky.

"Alice, overcome with terror, begged me to descend, but the valve-cord had become entangled with other parts of the rigging, and resisted all my efforts to let out the gas, which now swelled the balloon until it threatened to burst.

"I had read enough of the history of aeronautics to know that the explosion of a balloon in the upper air is not very dangerous, and tried to calm my dear girl's fears by explaining that in such cases the resistance of the atmosphere soon throws the envelope of the balloon into the form of a parachute, that breaks the force of the fall.

"But I was not given much time for theorising. It had now grown so dark that we could scarcely see each other. As we cowered in the car, uncertain of what a second might bring forth, a ball of fire whizzed through the sooty darkness, illumining two peculiarly angry clouds that had made their appearance, one in the north-west, and the other directly opposite in the south-west. Swaying and swelling for a moment, as if moved by the impulses of living beings, they rushed madly together and formed a single, olive-green, funnel shaped cloud, that glowed in its upper part with a weird light, and began to whirl and hum like some gigantic top. It was a tornado spout!

"At the same time the air round us was filled with so stifling a smell of sulphur that Alice fell fainting into my arms. Our quivering balloon again bounded upwards, and then there was a report like a distant pistol shot. I knew that the balloon had exploded, and braced my nerves for the terrible descent. Kneeling, I supported Alice with my left arm, and with my disengaged hand got a vice-like grip on the rim of the car. As we began to fall, the car swaying frightfully from side to side, I heard a hoarse, rumbling sound like that preceding an earthquake, and glanced westward. The tornado funnel, humming and whirling round and round, like a mill-wheel, casting an unearthly radiance far above it, zigzagging at times from side to side, and lashing its tail like some maddened leviathan, was rushing straight towards us! What occurred the next instant I heard rather than saw. A whirr as of mighty wings, a rattle, as of musketry, a bellowing as of mad bulls, and we dropped like a stone into the abyss.

"I hardly expect to convey any conception of my sensations. For the first second there was the sickening feeling that one has when dreaming of falling from a high cliff. But, instead of the awakening bump, I felt a galvanic-like shock, my hair and beard standing erect, a pricking as of needles over my face and neck, a painful light shooting through my eyeballs, and my whole body alternately tossing and stiffening, as if from strychnia poisoning.

"The next moment I was plunged into a delicious bath of cool vapour, the rapidity of the descent gradually lessening, until at last the sense of falling ceased altogether, and the car began spinning in a jerky, pulsatory manner, but with incredible rapidity, round and round, as it appeared to me, in horizontal circles.

"All round me was a pitchy darkness, and from out that darkness came two sounds that Heaven grant I may never hear again. One, a commingled roar and wail that seemed to burst upward from the bowels of the earth: the other a continuous cutting, high-pitched, humming sound for which earth affords no comparison, unless it were the noise that would be made by the simultaneous buzzing of innumerable circular saws. This humming, never ceasing for a moment, and cutting through the fearful darkness, was inexpressibly horrible. Pitched high above the roar and wail that came from below, it jarred my very bones.

"To add to the horror of it all, Alice had slipped to the floor of the car, and my hands, feeling for her in the darkness, encountered a face cold as marble. As I strained my eyes to see her, a tiny shaft of light filtered down through the gloom above and fell upon her upturned face. It looked white as snow in the sickly ray. But her eyes were only partially closed, and for a moment my heart throbbed with joy as I fancied I could detect a tremulous movement of the blue-veined lids. Then the light went out like a snuffed candle, and left us again in the whirling, humming darkness. But only for an instant. Again it shone downward, and soon a dull, spectral glow lit up the glow around us.

"What I now try to describe to you, I saw, of course, after my senses had somewhat recovered from their utter bewilderment. I found our car, on the rim of which the hoop had fallen with the wreck of rigging and silk still hanging to it, whirling, without visible means of support or propulsion, in the interior of an immense hollow, funnel-shaped cloud, that was spinning round and round with such bewildering rapidity that I should not have known that it moved at all save for the fact that it revolved, not in a regular, continuous manner, like a top, but in a pulsatory, intermittent way, like the ratchet-wheel of a clock (except that the revolutions were from right to

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left), and caught up at intervals visible spirals of vapour that swirled from the central axis of the funnel and sometimes dashed over us in a fine spray.

"The upper portion of the funnel was filled almost to the central axis with a luminous mist which was apparently in a state of rapid vibration, and through which could be dimly seen, floating on its upper surface, a phosphorescent disc of light, about the size of a dinner plate, from which there radiated towards the outer wall of the funnel concentric rings of light that were continually shifting and wavering in their hues.

"Brain-sick as I was, from the incredible speed, and appalled by the deafening noises, I still had some confused idea that we were in a tornado cloud. But what supported us? The envelope of the balloon had long since been shredded by the fury of the blast.

"Glancing downward, I saw indistinctly numerous objects in the embrace of the whirl.

"Once what looked like a large iron bridge was sucked up into the cloud for a short distance and, after floating for a few seconds, fell and disappeared. I believe I caught a glimpse of the earth as the lower part of the funnel ceased for a moment its furious lashings to and fro, and became partly cleared of the innumerable objects that were rushing pell-mell into its mouth.

"Suddenly the truth flashed upon me! It was the air itself that supported us! We were in the interior of an immense revolving flue, into which, as it travelled forward, powerful ascensional currents of air were indrawn at the earth below, and it was these upward, spiral streams, howling and shrieking as they were sucked into the vortex, by which we were carried round and round like a leaf in a small dust storm. But, oh, with what fearful velocity! Looking back on that vertiginous flight, I can but smile at the calculations of meteorologists that in the most violent tornadoes the centripetal whirl of the wind has a velocity of eight hundred miles an hour!

"I now began to feel a singular buoyancy of spirits. I rapidly recalled miraculous escapes of persons struck by tornadoes, and recollected especially having read that in the New Brunswick tornado of 1835, a lad had been carried upward and onward for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and afterwards deposited in safety. I remembered, too, that the spout which passed over Mount Carmel in 1877, and of which I myself had been an unwilling spectator, had carried bodily the spire of the Methodist Church a distance of over fifteen miles. I was even seized by a transport of joy at the thought that I alone, of all men, had been permitted to ride on the very wings of the wind.

"But how soon that elation collapsed! Suddenly something whirling near us became entangled in the mass of cordage and silk hanging to the hoop. I got the thing, and pulled it into the car. It was a rooster, entirely denuded of feathers, but still gasping with some sort of life. In spite of all, I could not help smiling at this unexpected visitor from the farmyard, and the picture of fear he presented as, with mouth agape, eyes protruding, and plumage gone, he lay quite still on the floor, occasionally sticking his head under his wing to shut out the horrid sights and sounds.

"A deathly chill crept over me. No mere wind, however violent, could divest a fowl of its feathers without killing it outright. But one agent in all nature could do it. I suddenly remembered my own sensations during the first sweep of my descent, and clapped my hands to my face and head: both were as free of hair as a newborn baby's. 'This rooster,' I then thought, 'has evidently been carried to the top of the funnel into that electric sea, which has stripped him of his plumage as it has me of my hair and beard. He had fallen again into the path of the tornado, and has been sucked up the second time into the vortex by the indrawn currents. *Is it possible for the same thing to happen to us?*'

"I now began rapidly to reflect upon what I had merely noticed before, that some of the objects that were sucked up would whirl past us and very suddenly shoot outwards through the walls of the funnel, while other and heavier objects would continue to circle below or sometimes fall back to earth. Plainly there was an altitude in the funnel where the ascending air-streams tended so strongly outwards from the centre that the objects light enough to reach that altitude were hurled through the walls.

"We might ourselves reach that altitude, for the violence of the whirl was increasing, the humming noise growing shriller and shriller, till it was elevated to the highest pitch of screaming. Suddenly something seemed to burst in my head, and all was silent. I looked up. The humming disc, the swirling spirals of vapour had not vanished, nor did it seem possible that such motion could exist apart from sound. There could be only one explanation. I had become wholly deaf!

"To add to the horror of the moment, I now discovered that our car was ascending. Instead of travelling horizontally in our circuits, it would shoot spirally upwards for a few feet, where it would make the circuit of the tunnel till another stronger current from below would whirl it up a few feet further. Another moment and the funnel was lit up with an intense light. Again I glanced upwards. The disc that had hung at the top of the funnel was sinking towards us, and we were slowly rising to meet it.

"Like a bird before a basilisk, I gazed at the fiery disc. Nearer and nearer it came, larger and larger it grew. Swimming about in the mist, now fiercely luminous and shooting from side to side of the funnel, now of a dull and dying red, and slowly rotating on its axis, but ever sinking, sinking.

"Stone-deaf as I was, I could hear it splutter and hiss like red-hot iron plunged into water. I know not what power of action at length possessed me. I rose to my feet. I caught Alice up into my arms. Rather than pass through that hell of fire I determined——"

Here the story was abruptly broken off. As his narrative neared its crisis, the Professor had been labouring under intense excitement, and at this stage of the narrative he suddenly stopped, and there was a repetition of his singular actions on deck. His visage assuming an expression of the most abject terror, and his eyes dilating like the eyes of a cat in the dark, he thrust forward his head and inclined it as if in the act of listening. Remaining fixed in this posture for a few moments, there flashed forth from his eyes a fire so vivid that the very atmosphere in front of him appeared to be thrown into a tremulous luminosity. Then, trembling like a man about to have an attack of epilepsy, he threw up his hands with a convulsive motion and fell to the floor in a swoon.

I hastily summoned assistance. The ship's doctor took him in charge. His malady must have been a serious one, for he was confined to his state-room the rest of the voyage. Though I made repeated efforts to visit him, the doctor's orders were peremptory that no one should see him. When we reached port the Professor was still ill. I have neither seen nor heard of him since.

ALLEN QUINAN.

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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CAPTAIN PETERS AS ANANIAS.

CAPTAIN HIRAM PETERS, as the reader will already have guessed, was the sort of man who, when he has taken anything in hand, puts it through at all personal and other hazards and in the shortest possible space of time. He was fully impressed with the absolute necessity of getting on board the *Minnehaha* and running her out of the Bay of Santo Domingo with as little delay as might be. He thought of his three hundred thousand dollars and the time when he would be not only captain but owner of the beautiful craft, and he made up his mind that before she fell a prey to anyone else he would either fight her guns while he had a man or a cartridge left, or drive her engines till the boilers blew up and, as he put it to himself, whooped her into glory with all hands.

The consequence was that, shocking horseman as he was, he not only managed to keep his seat in the saddle, but he covered the fifty odd miles to Santo Domingo in a little over twelve hours, and arrived in the city soon after sunrise the next day, stiff and sore, hungry and sleepy, with an exhausted vocabulary, and in the vilest of tempers, but still solidly resolved not only to get the *Minnehaha* out of the bay, but to make the treacherous little President help him to do it.

As he had humped and rolled and jolted over the weary miles, a plan had somehow shaken itself together in his mind which was at once daring and characteristic. Instead of attempting to go surreptitiously on board the yacht, he rode into the city with all the dignity that his aching bones would let him assume, dismounted thankfully in the courtyard of the Grand Hotel Central in the Plaza Mayor, drank three cups of coffee well dashed with brandy, ordered a room, and went and laid down for an hour or so for a much-needed rest and a quiet think. His companion he sent down to the jetty at the Bastion San Gil with orders to get a boat, if the *Minnehaha's* were not there, and go on board and tell the Chief Officer to have a full head of steam by ten o'clock. Soon after eight he himself got up, had a wash and a couple of cocktails, and went to the palace. The President was up taking his coffee with Madame Sybil on the veranda overlooking the patio.

As no one knew anything of the two messengers having been sent up to Lorrain, Don Gregorio was not a little surprised when the Captain's note requesting an immediate interview was brought to him. There could be no great harm come, as he thought, by granting the request and satisfying his own curiosity, so he gave orders for Captain Peters to be shown in at once, and as he came along the veranda he rose to meet him and shook hands with the greatest affability, and Madame Sybil graciously did the same.

"Well, Señor Capitan, this is indeed a surprise," said Don Gregorio, when the morning greeting had passed. "We thought you were far away up the Ozama, treasure-seeking with Don Francisco. May I ask what brings you back so suddenly to San Domingo?"

"I guess no one has a better right to, your Excellence," he replied, speaking very seriously, "seeing how very much it's got to do with you."

"Ah, what is that!" said Don Gregorio a trifle anxiously. "With me? How can that be, Señor Capitan? May I ask if my excellent friend, Don Francisco, has also come back, or is coming?"

"Well, Excellence, it is just about that that I came to see you. I've brought you a message from the Seenyor. He didn't have any pen and ink with him. It got forgotten, so he wants you to kindly excuse a letter. No, he is not coming back, and what's more, he isn't going to. He's found the treasure all right——"

"Ah! What, already?" Don Gregorio interrupted, with a start of surprise. "His good fortune has been our wonder! How did he do it so quickly?"

"Waal," replied the Captain quietly, and looking steadily at him while he spoke. "As far as I could see the Seenyor and her ladyship just walked straight along the stream till they came to a certain place, the seenyor looked at the map he'd got, took a good stare round at the scenery, found three biggish palm trees standing in a sort of triangle, two on one side of the stream and one on the other. Then he got a long bit of line and ran it round these trees, and started the chaps digging in the middle of the space. Pretty soon they found a thick old rusty chain leading to the stream, then he had a bit of a trench dug round to take the water off the bed, and then plumb under the bed of the stream they came on old Don Christoval's treasure-chest."

"Ah!" interrupted Don Gregorio again, with flushed face and eyes a-glitter. "Ah, how great was his fortune! And was there anything in it, Señor Capitan?"

"Waal, I should smile, Excellence. It was a mighty big chest; old hard oak, covered with lead and bound with iron, and when we got the lid clear and ripped it off, it was

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full chock-a-block with good old Spanish doubloons, fresh as if they'd been coined yesterday, and there were gold chains and rings and bracelets, and crosses and other religious fixings set with diamonds and rubies and emeralds. Great snakes, I tell you I never saw nothing like them! And then there was another box—a little one—inside it, and when we got that out and opened it it was just full of jewels and precious stones. No gold, mind you, there wasn't room for that, but just stones, regular big shining beauties, and I reckon three or four hundred thousand dollars wouldn't be far off the price of that one box?"

He paused for a moment or two to watch the effect of his words, and saw that it was all he had meant it to be. He could see that the madness of the gold lust was in their blood, flushing in their cheeks, and shining in their eyes. Don Gregorio's short breath was coming shorter and quicker than ever, and the lace of the mantilla which Madame Sybil had thrown round her shoulders showed that her breast was rising and falling more quickly than usual beneath it.

"Pray, go on, Captain Peters," she said very graciously. "I, for one, am dying to hear the rest. Tell us now what Don Francisco is doing with this wonderful treasure."

"That is just what I was coming to, ma'am," said the skipper, with a most provoking slowness. "Just as we were getting it out and doing it up in the packs, up comes one of our fellows from the yacht on horseback, galloping for his life to tell the Seenyor about this new craft that has come in here. She belongs to a couple of, well, I won't just call them pirates, though they ain't much better, who have also got on to this treasure of old Seenyor Christoval's. It was a bit of a race out here, in fact, and the *Minnehaha* got in first. The Seenyor knows their plans to a hair, and that's why he is not coming back. They are going up after him with a lot of their men, and if they were to meet him coming down with the treasure, there would be considerable shooting, which, as the Seenyor's got a lady with him, he isn't having any of just now; so he sent me down here to take the *Minnehaha* out and round to a certain point on the coast which I am not at liberty to mention just now while there might be anyone listening, and there he'll meet me with the treasure and ship it before they get a chance to put their thieving-irons on to it."

Captain Peters paused again here and took a sip at the coffee that had been brought him, and while he was doing so he saw the President and Madame Sybil exchange a swift and stealthy glance. Then he went on again:

"Seems also that there is another serious bit in the business which makes it pretty inconvenient for the Seenyor to come back to the city just now. There is a young lady on board who is the sister of his late lamented lordship, Sir Langton, and also aunt to that youngster who had the accident out at sea the other morning——"

"Ah! What is that you say?" exclaimed Madame Sybil, leaning over the table towards him. "What is that? An accident? Tell me of it."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied the skipper, who had no idea of the deep interest that she had in asking. "It was this way. The poor little fellow was playing about the deck and climbing about the rail aft when her ladyship wasn't looking, and a bit of a sea hit her on the other quarter, and being a very lively craft she gave a jump and when we looked the lad was gone. We stopped, of course, and lowered a boat and did what we could to find him, but it wasn't no sort of use, for we never saw him again. He must have gone right down. It maybe a shark helped him, poor little beggar. We were pretty sorry I can tell you, for he was as nice a little lad as ever you saw, and we were all getting to like him.

"But that," he went on in his ignorance of Madame Sybil's thoughts, "although it was an accident, doesn't go very well with the other one that happened to his lordship. I guess you will see what I am driving at there, your Excellence, and the plain American of it is that if the Seenyor was to come down here, or the *Minnehaha* was to stop much longer in the bay, Mr. Tristam and his friend would be going to the British Consul, and sending cablegrams to Kingston and Barbadoes and St. Thomas, and making things generally unpleasant for everyone concerned, and you just bet it would be unpleasant for everyone if they got up an inquiry here with two or three British warships cruising round the mouth of the harbour ready to land a squad of marines and blue-jackets just to see fair play. What do you think, your Excellence?"

It was a home thrust for Don Gregorio, and it didn't make Madame Sybil herself feel particularly comfortable. Neither of them knew just how much Captain Hiram Peters knew, and certainly no one could have spoken with a more perfect assumption of knowledge than he did. Moreover, neither of them had any notion how much Tristam and his friends knew, or just what their intentions might be. They were both haunted by the paralysing consciousness of blood guiltiness, and Don Gregorio more especially knew that anything in the shape of an inquiry conducted on the lines of cold-blooded, impartial Anglo-Saxon common sense, might be an exceedingly disastrous thing for himself; while as for Madame Sybil, she was already so utterly disgusted and sick at heart with her present lot in life that any promise of change would have been welcome to her, for in her soul she loathed and hated the greasy little scoundrel on whose protection she had been driven to cast herself. Hence Captain Peters' next words fell on ears more than ready to welcome them.

"And that being so," he went on after another of his judicious pauses of observation, "it seemed to the Seenyor that it wouldn't be quite a bad thing for your Excellence and her ladyship here just to come aboard the *Minnehaha* and take a run out to sea with us. You see, it's this way. If your Excellence comes along and we hoist the Dominican flag, as we did before, they daren't shoot. It 'd be more than the commission of any British or American officer would be worth to do it, so we shall get clear out. Then your Excellence can meet the Seenyor and take over your share of the treasure.

"A trip to Europe or up the States wouldn't be a bad thing when you get it. You see it'd pan out at a couple of hundred thousand dollars at least from what I've seen of it, and that is not bad spending money, to say nothing of getting out of a bit of a tight place. But of course that's for you to decide. I've got the Seenyor's orders to take the *Minnehaha* out of here, and I've got his orders to ask the favour and honour of your Excellence's company and her ladyship's on board, and I think that's about all. I have said what I was told to say and it's for you to say what you'll do, but anyhow the *Minnehaha's* going out at ten o'clock this morning, peaceable, I hope, but she's going."

There was a considerable silence after Captain Peters had delivered himself of this ultimatum. He lit another cigarette from the stump of his old one, paying a good deal of apparent attention to the process, and waiting with the air of a man who has done all he is going to do. Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil were each busily pursuing the especial line of thought which the circumstances laid down for each respectively, and in the end these two lines converged to the same point of conviction.

To Madame Sybil the idea of getting away from this dull, hot, evil-smelling old Spanish town, back into the great European world which had now been lost to her for so long was irresistible, and she was prepared to run any reasonable sort of risk to get there even for a few weeks or months. To Don Gregorio the prospect was no less inviting, and in his case, too, there were other considerations. If Lorrain had got the treasure and was taking it down to some other point on the coast, his idea of allowing the two search parties to meet and shoot each other to death fell to the ground. If Tristam went up to the Ozama, he would go to find nothing. Why not let him go? After

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all, he was a stranger, while Lorrain was an old acquaintance, bound to him at least by the ties of common crime.

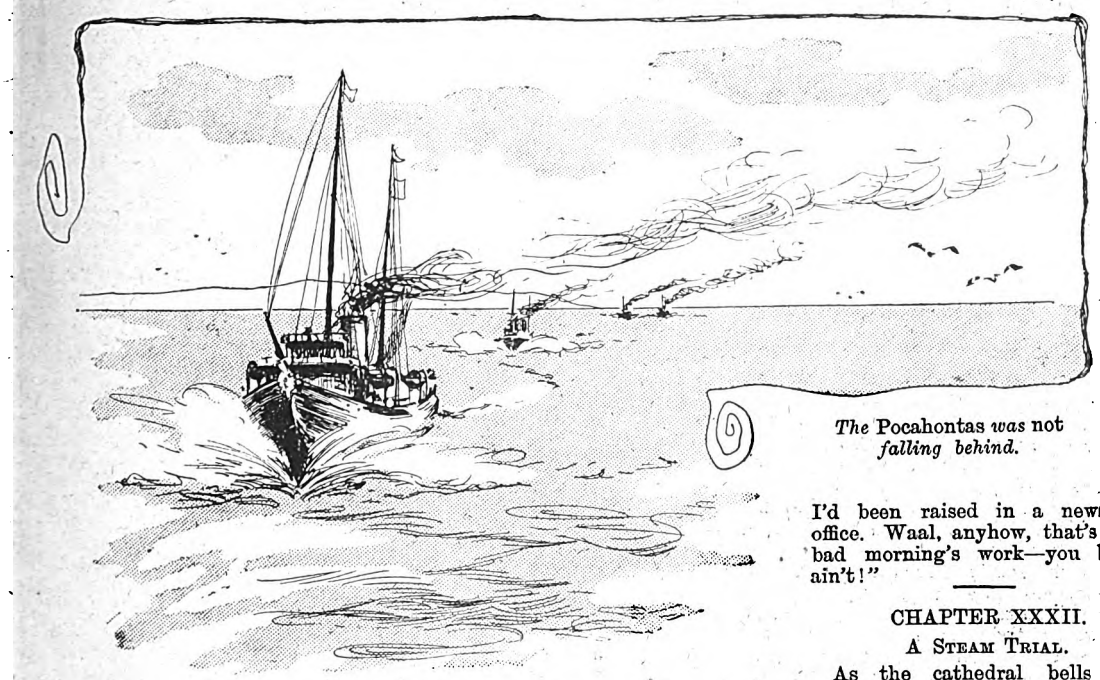
Of the two it was certainly better to trust Lorrain, to say nothing of the awkwardness that might result from an inquiry by the British Consul and the captains of the men-of-war into the mysterious disappearance of the man whom he had forced to die by his own hands in the cell under the citadel. Altogether the chance of an easy get-out looked very pleasant indeed to both of them, especially when viewed in conjunction with the near prospect of a substantial share in the treasure and all the immediate advantages that it would buy.

"Señor Capitan," said Don Gregorio at length, "for myself I thank Don Francisco for sending me this friendly invitation, and you for bringing it. I always knew that he would give his old friend a part in his good fortune when he found it. For my myself I say yes, we will take a little trip with you. The city is not healthy at this time of year.

"And the *Minnehaha's* propellers, ma'am, shall begin to go round between that and five minutes past, and I guess we'll have a real pleasant trip. And now," he continued, rising from the chair, "I'll just go on board and get everything fixed up. I presume, Excellence, that we shall go out under the Dominican flag?"

"Assuredly," said the President, as they shook hands; "assuredly, that will be safer. They will not dare to violate the flag. Under that we shall be safe."

"Safe!" chuckled the skipper, when he got outside the palace. "Ye-es, you'll be mighty safe when I get you on board the yacht, you yaller-skinned, half-baked son of a heathen greaser! You bet you'll be safe! Hiram Peters, you're a darned good steam-boater and not any particular slouch in a fight, but, by the ghost of Ananias I believe you're a better liar on the spot than either! I wonder what the Seenyor'd have thought of me if he'd just have been sitting there list'ning to me slinging off those lies just as if



The Pocahontas *was* not *falling behind.*

I'd been raised in a newspaper office. Waal, anyhow, that's not a bad morning's work—you bet it ain't!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A STEAM TRIAL.

The rebellion is broken and that thief Manuelo is dead. I shall say that I am going to Europe to raise a big loan for the treasury, and that I shall bring it back in that wonderful ship of yours. Garcia, the Vice-President, belongs to me, and he will keep things in order till I come. Besides, they will not forget those guns soon. What think you, querida, will you come?"

"With pleasure!" said Madame Sybil decisively. "After all the trouble we have had with this wretched revolution, we could not have a pleasanter change. Do you say that you start at ten, Captain Peters? Don't you think you could give me another hour? You know a woman isn't like a sailor, always ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. She wants to pack. Don't you think you could make it eleven?"

"Madame," replied the skipper with one of his very best bows, "sooner than put a lady to any inconvenience in that way, I'll take it on myself to stretch my orders by a couple of hours. Will twelve o'clock suit you?"

"Perfectly," she said. "The President's launch shall be at the bottom of your gangway steps as the clock strikes, so far as I am concerned."

As the cathedral bells were chiming mid-day, Tristam, who had just been up to the palace and paid his five hundred pounds to Don Gregorio and come back on board the *Pocahontas* with the signed concession and a lengthy, but hastily scribbled note from Madame Sybil in his pocket, to which he had already replied with a single word over his signature, saw the presidential launch leave the end of the jetty and run alongside the *Minnehaha*, whose anchors were already hauled short.

A minute or two afterwards his glasses showed him Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil standing on the deck of the yacht shaking hands with Captain Peters. At the same moment the Dominican colours ran up the flag-staff at the stern, the next her screws began to revolve and she glided ahead over her anchors.

Tristam, who was standing forward near the conning-tower with Courtland and the two lieutenants, said, as he took his cap off and bowed to Madame Sybil:

"Courtland, with your permission we'll have a bit of a speed trial outside. At any rate, I suppose that's what Captain Peters expects, and there is no object in disappointing him."

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"I'm there!" he replied. "If we can't have a fight, a race will suit me down to the ground. I'll go and tell the skipper."

"And you, gentlemen," Tristam went on, turning to the two lieutenants, "will you oblige me by signalling to the *Hermione* and the *New York* to follow us at their best speed, and to keep on round the coast as far as the entrance to Samana Bay, where they will probably pick us up again. I have the best of reasons for doing this, and I'll explain matters fully when we get outside."

"I'll make the private signal to the *Hermione*," replied Lieutenant Stockton, "and she can pass it on to the *New York*. The little skipper won't understand it then. He'll just think it's a signal to follow."

As he moved away to do this Muriel and Gwynneth came up arm-in-arm to ask what the meaning of all the sudden blowing off of steam and rattling of winches meant.

"Well, you see," replied Tristam, "the *Minnehaha* is putting to sea, and we're going after her to have a sort of speed trial, and later on we hope to pick up Lorrain and her ladyship."

"And that means that you're going to fight them somewhere," said Muriel, turning a trifle pale for the moment. "For I don't suppose you expect to pick up Mr. Lorrain without a fight."

"It may come to that," replied Tristam a little gravely. "But I hardly think so. Still, if you would prefer it, we could put you ashore at the British Consulate, or I'm sure Captain Arbuthnot would be delighted to receive you on the *Magicienne*."

"Oh, certainly not!" she said, and Gwynneth nodded decided acquiescence at the same time. "We haven't come as far as this to be left out at the end, and besides, if you go I'm going."

"Very well," he said. "We shall be only too glad to have your company, of course, and, after all, I don't suppose there'll be anything more exciting than a good steaming race. Ah! there she goes."

The *Pocahontas*, looking about twice her size, came along a couple of cables behind her, and both saluted the warships as they passed. The *Hermione* and *New York* were already under way, standing outside and waiting to take what part they could in the race. Both yachts saluted the *Magicienne*'s flag as they passed at a speed of about twelve knots, with the impatient steam roaring from their pipes. As the *Pocahontas* went by the *Magicienne*'s men cheered her, and Captain Peters, standing proud, happy, and confident once more on the bridge of his beloved craft, laughed quietly as he heard it, and said to Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil, who were standing beside him:

"I don't call that quite polite to us, but I guess Mr. Tristam will want more solid comfort than a whoop like that when that hooker's busted her boilers trying to keep track of *us*. Now we'll quicken up a bit."

He put his hand on the telegraph handle and sent the signal: "Half Speed" to the engine-room. This meant nominally fifteen knots, and almost simultaneously a faint tinkle came from the *Pocahontas*. Captain Peters grinned as he heard it, and turned his glasses intently on her for two or three minutes. The two yachts were moving at exactly the same speed, and the *Hermione* and *New York* had now joined in and were steaming abreast about half a mile to the southward.

"I wonder what in thunder those fellows think they are going to do!" said the skipper, continuing his running commentary, speaking partly to himself and partly to the others. "They know darned well that they daren't fire a shot, and if it amuses them to convoy us a bit of the way, they can just burn as much of Uncle Sam's coal or Queen Victoria's as they want to."

"Then you don't think there'll be any fighting?" said Madame Sybil, with an air of relief.

"No, ma'am; at least, not till the Seenyor gets on board. My orders are to run, not fight, and you'll see a run inside the next hour that'll make them brass-bound fellows on board them old fish-kettles over there open their eyes just about as wide as they'll go. I wonder what speed that chap behind has got. Let's try him at twenty."

The telegraph bell tinkled again, and Madame Sybil felt the bridge begin to quiver under her, and, although the day was almost absolutely calm, the wind began to rush past her ears and through her hair. The bell was almost instantly echoed as before, and again Captain Peters took his glass, only to find that the distance between the two yachts hadn't increased by a yard; but the two cruisers had now evidently got all they could do. The smoke was pouring out of their funnels in dense black volumes that looked solid enough to walk upon, and the *Hermione* was beginning to forge a little ahead of the *New York*.

"Bully for you, sonnies!" chuckled the skipper again. "Stoke up, you'll want all your steam to keep sight of us soon."

They were well clear of the land now and in deep water, and steering a course by about east to south. The sea was one wide, waveless expanse of long, lazy, oily-looking rollers, and in absolutely perfect condition for a steaming race.

"I guess it's about time to say good-bye," said the skipper, after another look round with his glasses, and he sent down the signal for twenty-five knots. Then he went on, turning to Madame Sybil:

"I hope you won't think me rude, ma'am, if I suggest that you'd better go down on deck and get behind something. In another minute or two it'll be blowing up here fit to take the horns off a cow."

"If you don't mind, Captain Peters," she replied, "I'd rather stop up here and risk the wind. One can see so much better, and really it's getting quite exciting."

"As you please, ma'am—as you please; but if you get your hair blown out by the roots—well, you won't blame me. Anyhow, there's the wheel-house you can go into when it gets too strong."

"For me, I shall go below," said Don Gregorio, "and take a smoke; it is not comfortable here any longer."

While he was climbing down, Captain Peters again turned his glass on the *Pocahontas*, and, somewhat to his displeasure, found that, instead of being half a mile or so behind, as she should have been, she was still only about three cables. The war-ships were visibly dropping behind.

"That's pretty tall steamin', Mr. Tristam," he said. "I own up I didn't think it of you, but anyhow I see you mean to run us down if you can. Waal, we'll see. Jackson, make the course east south-east."

As he said this he sent another signal to the engine-room, and to the astonishment and envious admiration of the officers of the two cruisers, which were now doing their very utmost and making a bare twenty knots, if that, the beautiful craft swung slightly round and went skimming across their bows at a good thirty knots an hour.

"Now, mister," he continued, turning his glasses on the *Pocahontas* again. "I guess you've got to hump yourself some if you don't want to say good-afternoon. Twenty-five you may do, but thirty——"

He stopped and stared with his eyes glued to his glasses, and his teeth audibly gritting on each other. The *Pocahontas* was *not* falling behind, and what was more, the steam was still singing merrily from the escape-pipes, and that showed that she still had something in hand.

"Waal I'm darned," he muttered between his clenched teeth. And then he went down on deck and sent a quartermaster to the chief engineer The gaunt, dreamy-looking man of machinery came up from the engine-room with a flush on his thin cheeks and a bright light in his eyes. His beloved engines were making 400 revolutions a minute, and he was beginning to live.

"Well, Captain," he said, "we're doing a good thirty, and the engines are working to perfection. Eh? What's that?" he went on with a little start, as he looked aft and saw the *Pocahontas* still hanging stubbornly on the quarter. "D'you mean to say we haven't shaken her off yet?"

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"I mean to say, Mr. Pinner," replied the skipper with a distinct snap in his voice, "that if we're doing thirty, she's doing thirty. There she is. Every time I've rung my bell I've heard hers go, and, judging by them pipes, she's got a bit in hand still. How much have you got?"

The engineer looked a little anxiously at the beautiful white shape that was flying through the water astern of them at a speed so exactly regulated that the two yachts seemed stationary. "I can give you three more knots with safety, Captain, and five more with a certain amount of risk. We haven't got the oil blast on yet."

"Then put it on right away," said the skipper, "and give us all you can without taking any risk. When the Seenyor gets on board he can drive her for all she's worth, but there is no need for a bust-up just now."

"Very well, Captain. You shall have the other three

Sent for the chief engineer again.

knots within ten minutes. Then I think you'll find our friend will begin to drop behind."

"Great snakes, I hope so!" said the skipper, turning aft and taking a cigar out of his case. "I reckon the Seenyor'd be pretty wild if he found there was another craft afloat that the *Minnehaha* couldn't show her heels to. I wonder where in thunder Tristam found her. Now if we only had both of them. Waal, we'll see about that later on. I'd give more'n twenty-five cents to be able to put a shell through those funnels, and I reckon the Seenyor *will* do it too if Mr. Tristam wants to make any trouble, but I would like to know how much the engineer of that craft has up his sleeve. Ah, now she's feeling it again!"

The quivering deck under his feet seemed to grow steadier as he spoke, but this only meant that the vibrations were more rapid. The green swathes of water swirled away faster than ever astern, and the foam-bubbles churned up by the whirling screws swept away so fast that the wake looked like a track of smooth snow. Minute by minute the speed of the flying craft increased. He cast another look back at the *Pocahontas*, and went on the bridge again.

The hand on the dial of the speed-indicator had already passed thirty-two knots, and was wavering on to the thirty-three. Again his glasses went up and again he could see no difference in the relative positions of the two yachts. He looked round at the dial again; the hand was touching the thirty-three. Again his glasses went on to the *Pocahontas* and now—yes, the white, outward-curved prow, with its gilded head scroll-work, began to go back, ever so slowly, but still back out of the field of vision.

"Got him!" said Captain Peters, putting his glasses down, with a quiet smile that had a lot of meaning in it. "I guess that's your limit, Mr. Tristam, and at a pinch I've two more knots, but I won't give those away just now."

He walked leisurely down from the bridge and sent for the chief engineer again. He came up looking brighter and happier, and ten years younger than before.

"Well, Captain Peters," he said, rubbing his perspiring hands together. "How will that do? Ah, now he is dropping astern. But a wonderful craft, Captain Peters, a wonderful craft. I wouldn't have believed that anything afloat could have held on to us for so long. I wonder where she was built and who made her engines?"

"Bully for you, Mr. Pinner, bully for you and your engines!" said the skipper, clapping him on the shoulder. "Never you mind who made his. Now just you go and slow her down to ten knots and then we'll split a bottle of the best, for I guess we've earned it."

All this time the excitement on board the *Pocahontas* had, as may be easily imagined, been growing higher and higher. The desperate ardour of the chase had got into everybody's blood, men and women, civilians and fighting-men alike, and at last the chief engineer had come on the bridge to Courtland to tell him that the yacht was making thirty-two knots an hour, and that she had barely another half-knot in her. The words were hardly out of his mouth before a screaming roar of escaping steam blared out from the *Minnehaha*. She seemed to stop dead on the water, and the next minute the *Pocahontas*, flying through the water at nearly forty statute miles an hour, had swept past her and forged several hundred yards ahead.

"Broken down!" said Courtland curtly. "I don't think we shall want that other half knot, Mr. Foster. We've got his measure, I think. Well, Tristram, what do you think of the *Pocahontas*?"

"A daisy!" laughed Tristram, "if I may venture to make use of the American language. What a gorgeous pirate she'd make. Hullo! That fellow's altered his course. Take care he isn't fooling you, Courtland. There is evidently a pretty smart man in command over there."

"Not much fear of that!" said Courtland confidently. "We've got him in speed, and we're much heavier armed if it comes to a scrap. Now I guess we'd better slow up, too, or we shall lose him. Captain Ferguson, will you do the needful?"

Then the steam roared out from the pipes in relief of the panting boilers, the revolutions of the engines dropped from 420 to 212 and the yacht slowed down to fifteen knots. He swung round on the same course as the *Minnehaha* was making. In half an hour they were together again heading a little more to the eastward. Whether or not anything had happened to the *Min ehaha's* machinery, all that could be seen from the *Pocahontas* was that she made no attempt to do more than ten knots. The afternoon waned into evening and the evening darkened into night. The night was cloudy and bade fair to be very dark, just as Lorrain, far away up the Ozama, was just then wishing it to be. Both yachts showed their lights then in the usual way and so they went on through the night round Saona Island, up through the Mona Passage, and round by Cape Macao and Cape St. Raphael until the darkest hour before the dawn. Then suddenly out went the *Minnehaha's* light, leaving only a black spot on the water melting into the surrounding darkness.

(To be continued.)

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The Curé's Story.

WE were sitting down to supper.

It was the last night that I was to spend under the hospitable roof of the Ibach parsonage. On the morrow I was to start for Paris *en route* to London.

A sprained ankle and a shoulder badly bruised, owing to a nasty fall on the Gibal, had compelled me to seek the assistance of a doctor, and, luckily, I found him in Father Seydell, the curé of Ibach, under whose wise treatment my progress had been rapid.

Supper had always been the meal at which conversation flowed freest. At supper the curé was wont to recount the small experiences of the day, and at supper I would often put in a reminiscence of the old hunting county in the Midland shires, where I had spent my first youth.

Father Seydell was a good listener. To anything I had to say about Loamshire folk and Loamshire ways he would listen with undisguised interest and intelligence alert.

Once, in the middle of a narrative, I asked him point-blank if he knew anybody in Galsworthy. He was filling his evening pipe, but stopped suddenly at the mention of the dear old Loamshire village which claims me for son; and looked up quickly as if recognising the sound of a familiar name. "No," he answered slowly; "he knew no one—nobody at all in England. He had never seen the country, and had no acquaintance amongst its people."

Our frugal repast being ended, and the talk beginning to drag, I started up sagacity in animals. The curé had shown himself a great lover of the four-footed friends of man, and apparently had a large fund of information regarding them to draw upon. I began a story about a horse which had belonged to Squire Galsworthy, of Galsworthy Park. But this evening my narrative somehow failed to interest. The good father listened only from habit. My words seldom got beyond his ears.

The gathering gloom of a dull autumn evening filled the chamber; a wood fire burnt on the hearth and threw weird shadows on the walls. Father Seydell sat silent and motionless, staring at the logs without seeing them, and neglecting the pipe and jar which thoughtful hands had placed within easy reach of his arm.

My wandering thoughts, going to and fro in search of an explanation, were still busy creating imaginary woes, when the door was pushed gently open, and Anna, the fat housewife, came forward, bearing in one hand the little copper lamp, and, in the other, a long, narrow bottle, which proved to be a sample of fine old Gallen-spitz, brought out from its hiding-place in honour of the parting guest.

Placing the lamp on the table, Anna drew the cork and carefully filled the tall green glasses. For a moment she lingered near the door, then vanished as silently as she had appeared. I smoked away solemnly, and awaited events. Presently, with a quick, impulsive movement, the curé pushed away his glass, spilling some of the contents, and, thrusting a hand into his bosom drew thence what I supposed to be some saintly token belonging to the service of his church. To my surprise, however, it proved to be a locket. Just a bright, gleaming silver locket, such as women wear; but of a shape and size which had long gone out of fashion. It was attached to a narrow ribbon of black silk that passed twice round the neck of the wearer.

If no relic of the church, it was a relic of human life and sweet human affection. Evidently, too, it had gathered about it memories both sacred and cherished.

Opening the pretty trinket with tender hands, the curé raised it reverently to his lips. There must have been virtue in the action, for it operated like a charm. The atmosphere began to clear immediately—the gloomy vapours to roll themselves away, and Father Seydell to recover somewhat of the *bonhomie* and geniality which had made my stay at the parsonage more of a pleasant interlude than a painful necessity.

"*Souvenir du temps passé*," he said, smiling rather mournfully as he extended the locket towards me.

A few strands of light flaxen hair skilfully worked into a simple design was all the treasure it contained.

"You shall hear its history," continued my worthy friend, and the locket was closed with a snap and returned to its place.

"The story is not a long one; but it concerns a countryman of yours, whose offence against myself I have forgiven. Yet the blood of the innocent shall not cry unto Heaven in vain. God Himself will be their Avenger."

The words were spoken with an emotion that revealed the curé in a light that was altogether unexpected. It showed that a man's heart beat under the priest's soutane. For a moment he paused; then, in the calm, steady, even tones that were habitual to him, he proceeded:

"My present age is fifty-three. I look back over the nine-and-twenty years which separate the parish priest of Ibach from the events connected with the silver token, which day and night lies always next my heart, and find myself chief cattle-tender in the Schächenthal. I enjoyed the fullest confidence of the Count, my master, and had under my orders many herdsmen and shepherds. It was I who selected the grazing ground. It was I who chose the cattle for market. Mine was a pleasant enough life. Honest work and willing hands make a contented mind. I lived on the best terms with the simple people amongst whom my father had cast in his lot, in the hope that change of settlement would heal the deep wound which the loss of my mother had made in his heart. But ere the first snow fell upon her grave, the poor man himself followed her, and left me an orphan in a land of strangers. A child soon finds friends. I was five years old, and a stout, sturdy lad. Happiest season, the springtide of life, when the days are long, uneventful, and man's estate looks a great way off!

"As soon as convenient, I entered the service of his

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Excellency by favour of his steward, and rose rapidly, until I was appointed head cattleman in the Schächenthal.

"Every soul in the valley, from Burglen away to Linthal, had a kind word and welcome for Franz Seydell; and Franz had a friendly nod and smile for each. But it was to the Widow Sulzer's that Franz went oftenest; and it was there he stayed longest. Mère Sulzer kept the Falcon, and put up the few tourists who, in their summer wanderings, would stray into the quiet valley to enjoy its tranquil beauty, and taste the sober pleasures of pastoral life.

"It was Marguerite Sulzer who took Franz Seydell so often to the Falcon. Tall and supple of figure, graceful as the lilies over which she bent, Marguerite was the belle of the valley. Her face was one to dream over. You may see it to-day in the Munich Gallery. Look for Carl Haag's "Maid of the Mill." Crowned with a glory of pale golden hair, which flowed in long ripples down to her feet, her head was the praise of sculptors; she carried it so superbly. And her eyes, blue and clear as the sky in summer, looked out shyly upon the world, and spoke a language more tender than words.

"What wonder, if many of the young fellows cast glances of admiration at the landlady's pretty daughter and envied the good fortune of light-hearted Franz, whose frequent visits to the rustic inn were slyly encouraged by the dainty, blooming maiden, and certainly were not frowned upon by the prudent, industrious housemother.

"On one of my journeys with the cattle I saw the pretty bauble which you have seen to-night. It was in the Kirchestrass at Constanz. For a man whose earnings were but sixty francs a month, the price was high. But what worshipper ever counted the cost of the sacrifice offered to his divinity? I bought it.

"On my return I went straight to the Falcon. The present from Constanz made me a welcome wooer. That night the 'old, old story' was told to no careless or unwilling ear. Before I had left the house Marguerite had pledged herself.

"Almost with the advent of the travelling season, there came into the Schächenthal a young Englishman of distinguished manners and good appearance. He was attended by his own servant, and travelling, so he gave out, for the recovery of his health. He was going up to the baths of Stachelberg.

"At our first meeting I conceived an unaccountable dislike to him. It was unreasonable, but I confess to feeling glad when I learnt that his visit was not likely to be long. Mother Sulzer was not so well pleased. The Englishman was the first visitor of the season, and evidently belonged to the class which can afford to pay for attention. But while the good mother would have delayed his departure I was anxious for him to be gone; and fervently did I hope never to see his handsome face in the Schächenthal again.

"But in a few weeks the English stranger was amongst us once more. This time he came alone, came, he said, to stay. 'The valley,' he told Marguerite, 'was a haven of rest to a weary soul.' God forgive him!

"The men lived like lords that year. The tap was always running, the kitchen always busy. The Englishman's money flowed like rivulets in spring.

"If fear lends us wings, love sharpens our sensibilities, and I was not slow to discover that a hateful presence had stepped between my love and me.

"From being merry as the sunshine and open as the day, having neither trouble to conceal nor sorrow to hide, Marguerite grew constrained, nervous, and shy. If I upbraided her she would take refuge in tears. 'I was jealous,' she said, 'and frowned at her so frequently that I frightened her. No wonder she was unhappy!'

"One day I noticed a necklace she was wearing. It was composed of curious-looking, greenish-coloured stones, strung on fine gold threads. She blushed, hesitated, and stammered that the English milord had given it her—he had wished her to accept it as a small acknowledgment of services rendered. He was leaving, she said, at the end of the month, and to refuse his gift would surely have been a breach of good manners, and certainly very ungrateful. Would I give her my permission to wear it?—for she would never do so again unless she had my consent.

"'And, see!' she ran on, in her soft, prattling way, 'here is your locket, sweetheart. It has never left my neck, Franz, since your hand placed it there. I sleep with it on my bosom, and every night when I lay down to rest, it is with your name upon my lips. Are you satisfied now, foolish boy that you are?

"It was a week exactly from the date of this incident that I received a summons to meet his Excellency at Constanz. It was a long journey in the forties. I was gone sixteen days. As I travelled back, counting the slow miles impatiently—I was bringing good news—news that I hoped Marguerite would rejoice to hear. His Excellency had been pleased to appoint me under-steward——I beguiled the tedium of the way with 'castles in Spain.'

"On reaching Aesch, however, I got news which staggered me. My limbs trembled, while my ears greedily drank in the words—words which destroyed my hopes and laid waste my happiness. All faint and weary, I pushed on without stopping to rest.

"Mother Sulzer, I found in bed. The severity of the blow had nearly killed her. The Englishman had gone, but Marguerite—my Marguerite, had fled with him.

"How I got through the next few weeks I cannot tell.

"The summer went, and winter came; but of Marguerite Sulzer the passing months brought no tidings to the valley, which for eighteen years had been her home.

"It was July of the following year, and I had just returned from a visit to the chalets and herdsmen on the Urner Boden, perhaps the highest pasturage in Switzerland. About halfway through the village, I noticed three women standing together. They were talking. Their voices did not reach me, but their faces, I saw, were sad and serious. As I drew near, they ceased speaking, and looked at me with the look which had struck a chill to my heart twelvemonths before. I knew then that Marguerite had come back."

"Weak, exhausted and miserable, she had crawled home to die. Her first inquiry was for me. I was at the old quarters they told her. She waited two days. I made no sign and she sent for me. My first impulse was to refuse, and I hardened my heart. But where is the man can withstand the pleading of a mother's tears? With streaming eyes, Mother Sulzer implored me to consent. 'For the love of Heaven! Franz,' she urged, 'come, come with me. Till she has looked into your face, the priest himself can bring no blessing—the poor child can get no rest. She has suffered more than she will tell. As you hope for pardon, Franz, come!'

"What could I do? I went, and the mute appeal of the silver locket, which lay in trustful confidence upon her breast, moved me as no words would have done.

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More eloquent than passionate entreaty, its silent pleadings sounded in my ears louder than sobs and cries and doleful lamentations. I trembled with an emotion I had thought nothing could ever awaken in me again. In that moment the old love came back upon me in full flood; and I forgave her as freely as I hope to be forgiven.

"'I am unworthy, Franz,' she murmured; 'unworthy to wear it, unworthy even to touch it; but——you will let me keep it to the end? Without it I should have died upon the way—with it I shall die here in peace. Then it spoke to me of hope; now it will speak to me of pardon.'

"Of all else she had stripped herself. Of all save the silver locket, the gift of honest love in happier days. Upbraid and condemn her as it might, my own poor gift had been religiously preserved. 'No, Franz,' she whispered faintly; 'no, sooner than part with it I would have perished by the road. It burnt me, burnt me like fire; yet I wore it by day and slept with it at night, though often it felt as if a burning coal was laid upon my heart. It was the locket, Franz, your locket, dear, which gave me courage to begin the journey and found me strength to finish it.'

"The graceless vagabond had taken her to Berne, induced her to sign a paper which, doubtless, he intended, if necessary, to be used against her—the place, he told her, was the office of the English Consulate—persuaded her that the affixing of her signature in the presence of the officials made her his wife according to English law, and then basely deserted her in Paris.

"In little more than a week Marguerite Sulzer and her infant babe were laid to rest in the quiet God's-acre at Untschüchen. To-day she would have been forty-seven."

The curé bent his head reverently, his lips moved, and the low ticking of the clock seemed the louder from the sudden hush which had fallen directly on the chamber. Resuming, he proceeded quickly:

"Some months later I obtained my discharge, and went into Wurtemberg. There I entered a seminary, studied medicine, and qualified for the Church. The remainder of my days I determined to devote to works of brotherly love and Christian charity. After the lapse of nearly thirty years my conscience and judgment approve my resolution.

"Throughout all that time I have striven to forget the name of the man whose lying lips brought shame and sorrow upon Marguerite Sulzer. Yesterday, and again to-night, I have heard it spoken. You were speaking, I think, of a Squire Galsworthy of Galsworthy Park. Would that be Thomas Galsworthy?"

"The same, Father. Squire Tom all through Loamshire."

"Is the man living?"

"No," I replied. "Squire Tom was killed in the hunting-field six years ago come Christmas. When his master fell, the horse stopped dead and stood over him whinnying till he brought assistance. But the Squire was past helping—his neck was broken. He left no family and the estate went to a nephew."

"'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,'" fervently ejaculated the curé.

There was a tap at the door. Anna came in with the candles, and Father Seydell bade me "Good-night," with a promise of God-speed in the morning.

H. HUNTER.

RESULT OF CHRISTMAS COMPETITIONS.

No. 1.

THE prize of £2 goes to Miss H. Giles, 7, Stafford Street, Old Bond Street, W.

A copy of "When the Birds Begin to Sing" goes to the following twelve:

Miss L. Higgs, Andersonstown, Falls Road, Belfast; G. H. Chittenden, 18, Lacon Road, East Dulwich; G. F. Matthews, 20, West Street, Chichester; Mrs. H. Rogers, 18, Baronsfield Road, East Twickenham; F. H. Parker, "Wensley," Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey; J. Shain, Longfellow House, 29a, Palmerston Road, Bowes Park, N.; E. Shalcross, 71, Myddleton Street, Clerkenwell; W. E. James, "Rosedale," Leighton-on-Lea, Essex; Prof. G. Townend, 5, Devonshire Place, East Barnet Road, New Barnes; W. Leslie, 1, Bannermill, Cottages, Aberdeen; Mrs. Dettmer, 46, Kingsgate Road, West Hampstead, N.W.; Miss A. Bullock, Blaby House, Drayton Road, King's Heath.

No. 2.

£2. W. H. Gillett, Gwithian, Hayle, Cornwall.

A copy of "Valdar the Oft-born" to the following twelve:

C. W. V. Clarke, 5, Grosvenor Road, Rugby; A. Randall, 3, Seymour Road, Harringay; D. Gilchrist, 29, West Scotland Street, Plantation, Glasgow; S. Bevan, 8, Stanley Terrace, Mt. Pleasant, Swansea; Miss Warwick, 16, Cornfield Terrace, Eastbourne; C. Clarke, Osborne Stables, East Cowes, Isle of Wight; E. Coulson, 36, Prairie Street, Queen's Road, Battersea; G. F. Saunders, 37, North Road, Bishopston, Bristol; Miss M. E. Wycherley, 10, St. Julians Friars, Shrewsbury; F. Morgan, 1, East Street, Bexley Heath; H. Robinson, The Parsonage, Heywood, Westbury, Wilts; F. M. Kew, 3, Albert Terrace, Farnboro', R.S.O., Kent.

No. 3.

£2. D. Gilchrist, 29, West Scotland Street, Glasgow.

A copy of "Guilty Gold" to the following twelve:

W. A. Smith, 33, York Terrace, Leigh, Lancashire; G. V. Wood, 2, Woodside Terrace, Onchan, Isle of Wight; H. J. Taylor, Collegiate School, Glastonbury; J. K. Engall, 1, Springfield Lodge, Springfield Road, Guilford; F. C. Spendelow, 45, Ling Street, Holt Road, Liverpool; R. Page, 43, Cadogan Place, Chelsea; Miss A. Sweet, 50, Portman Street, Rowbarton, Taunton; F. M. Whittingham, 5, Alvington Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth; A. Coulson, 2, Notts Cottage, Chase Side, Enfield; Miss A. Walker, 14, Esk Terrace, Whitby, Yorks; W. Gibbins, 7, Church Grove, St. Andrews Road, Small Heath, Birmingham; J. D. Lister, 105, Noel Street, Nottingham.

No. 4.

£2. F. M. Whittingham, 5, Alvington Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth.

A copy of "The Impudent Comedian" to the following twelve:

H. Gillett, Gwithian, Hayle, Cornwall; R. H. Williams, Wellington Road, Camborne, Cornwall; W. Ashton, The Drive, Chingford, Essex; Miss L. Grey, Clovelly, 100, King's Head Road, Catford, S.E.; W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley, Essex; J. H. Hutchinson, Ivy Cottage, Hollybank Road, Drumcondra, Dublin; H. Owen, 32, High Street, Wimbledon; T. Marsden, Studley House, Upper Belgrave Road, Clifton, Bristol; G. W. Blake, St. Martin's Terrace, Salisbury; C. Kille, 1, The Avenue, Minehead, Somerset; Miss A. Walker, 14, Esk Terrace, Whitby; A. Coulson, 2, Notts Cottage, Chase Side, Enfield.

No. 5.

£1. G. Cooper, 75, Maryville Street, Donegall Pass, Belfast.

£1. Miss M. Wood, "Kelton," South Croxted Road, West Dulwich.

A copy of "Jumbles" to the following twelve:

F. Jones, Sutton Weaves, near Warrington, Cheshire; S. H. Gordon Able, Onecote School, Leek, Staffordshire; W. King, 105, Gaythorne Road, W. Bowling, Bradford, Yorkshire; E. Jay, 12, Clwyd Street, New Brighton, Cheshire; G. Beadle, Elsie Villa, Kinver Road, South Sydenham; Miss E. Bringloe, 34, Tremlett Grove, Junction Road, N.; Miss V. E. Carter, The High School, Lichfield, Staffordshire; Miss G. Mayfield, 18, Stamford Road, Page Green, Tottenham; W. Collins, 24, Oglander Road, Maxted Road, East Dulwich; Miss H. Stille, 25, Snowdon Road, Eccles, Manchester; C. Ambler, Prospect View, Thornton, near Bradford, Yorks; E. Beach, 3, Newchatel Road, Perry Hill, Catford.

RESULT OF PUDDING COMPETITION.

(MAP OF ENGLAND.)

£2. Miss B. G. Jeffrey, 4, Albert Terrace, St. Edmunds, Church Street, Salisbury, Wilts.

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MERESIA

CHAPTER XXIII.

How can One Tell?

Spring had come, with its plethora of life, its atmosphere of beginnings, its green sunlit days suffused with poetry—surface poetry, such as the singing of proud father birds—the cooing of the dove upon her nest, and the universal motherhood of the natural world.

All things aged and experienced seemed out of place—intrusions—and the country, with its creative powers, and its scope for imagination, gave back to Meresia some taste of her not long absent girlhood, which Aladros had gathered in the bud and killed.

She was staying at her old home, occupying her old room, with the same aimless little ornaments decorating the shelves, the same pictures, the same books, but not the same Meresia! The past, which had left but faint traces in her face, could not fail to express its tragedy in her eyes.

It was a haunting, indescribable expression, that none failed to perceive, and all felt, hardly seeming to represent the mystery of suffering, but giving the impression of pain nevertheless, or rather the concealment of something too terrible to name.

Meresia had changed. She was a stranger among the old situations, branded by her crime, though no one saw the brand. As she met the familiar faces at every turn she thought of her secret, half bitterly, half triumphantly, and wondered if she had yet to pay the price.

Perhaps she would tell it at the end—gasp out the hideous details one by one to incredulous ears. They would say her mind was wandering and let her pass out of life unstained; speak of her as a child of Heaven, pure, untempted, bright with the image of God. Why, even since her husband's death she had found out to what lengths the charity of the quick may go towards the dead. A thousand virtues previously unexisting were now attributed to Alfonso, illuminating his memory with artificial light. People spoke to her of his tenderness, his liberality, his self-denial, for death had laid aside all his pride, his selfishness, ferocity, sensuality, and self-absorption! No, he had been kind, well-beloved, a benefactor in all the vicissitudes of his past existence, and this for the consolation of his widow, which filled her with secret disgust and anger.

After an elaborate description of Alfonso's goodness, given by Mrs. Milford for her daughter's benefit, Meresia took her severely to task, showing so much marked disapproval that her mother's vexation was aroused.

"If it is not true," she exclaimed, "you should be the last in the world to proclaim the fact—you who bear his name."

"Yes, I bear it mother, and find it not the least heavy of my burdens. I would give anything to dispense with it—to be Meresia Milford again."

"Why?"

"Because by being so called I am daily reminded of"—she paused for a word—"of my imperfection."

"Really, I do not understand."

"No, I hardly expected you would. Can't you imagine, though, that while I lived away from you, there may have been passages in my life of which I never speak—passages of an unsavoury nature, that even now are bitter to my taste? You have formed a habit of idealising the dead, and of painting my married life immoderately beautiful. This chafes and irritates me, when I know what weak, frail, fallen ideals you are holding up to worship. Human nature is a poor thing to exhibit—at best it must bear the traces of ruin—human nature, guilt, disorder, seem inseparably connected."

"But, my dear child, you must forget and forgive any little faults on the part of your husband."

"Oh! forgiveness is easy now, I do not pride myself on that. It must be a consolation to everyone to feel that, sooner or later, they will only be spoken of kindly. We are all subject to the law of death—but we are almost too proud to own it while we live. It is an implied insult to our physical strength."

"You are morbid and tired, Meresia, the dullness of these sad days have affected you morally as well as bodily. We thought—your father and I—that it might please you if we invited Dr. Serano to come down to-day to stay over Sunday, it makes a little change."

"Thank you, mother, but I don't want him. I am quite happy here with you."

"Just as I expected! You have no heart, poor child, to see anyone, and that is why I wrote without telling you, to Dr. Serano. Now it is too late to put him off; he is coming by the afternoon train, and bringing a friend who was staying with him in London. It will do you good to pull yourself together, to have people about that talk of outside things. I shall never forget Dr. Serano's kindness and forethought at the time of your trouble! He might have been a brother."

"Still I have no sisterly affection for Dr. Serano, and I wish you had not asked him. He always recalls that terrible night so vividly, and I never feel comfortable or happy in his presence. How soon will he be here?"

"Almost directly; the carriage has gone to the station."

Meresia's heart beat faster with a certain dread alarm. All unprepared, she was to meet again the partner of her crime. The secret between them made companionship unpleasant, for if she seemed gay, then his eyes convicted her, and if she proved melancholy, he suspected her of regretting the deed, or perhaps of betraying herself through weakness or fear. The wider the space between them, the better for Meresia's peace of mind.

There were days, here in the old home, when that night of reality became as a half-forgotten dream, an impossible thing! Now it was to live once more, José Serano was coming, to bring the past back!

"I must have time to grow accustomed to the idea," Meresia told herself, "I will escape for a little while."

She fetched her hat, called the dog, and slipping out into the garden by a side door, walked quickly away from the house. The lanes were quiet and peaceful, alone with nature, she could find rest. Every turn of these narrow ways, overrun with weeds and grass, and trimmed on all sides by wild primroses and violets, brought back some memory of her childhood. The very ground was consecrated to affection as she recalled the happy hours, and

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every stile and hedge had a value that a stranger's soul could never know. Each recollection was entwined with the threads of her existence. She wandered on, sensible only to the sweet things around her—the leaves, the scent, the air, the sparkle of life everywhere, the bloom, the glow, the majesty.

Meresia's poetic temperament could but rejoice in the spring. The activity of growth thrilled her soul with its energy and sense of beauty. Yearnings to escape from her black past and visions of good too great for earth were working in her now. Emancipated from the daily sufferings of her mind—the galling thought of the shamed fate she deserved—Meresia inhaled the fresh breeze, and, flinging herself on a bank of primroses and grass, felt every power within her invigorated and renewed.

"Ah, if I could always feel strong and brave!" she sighed. "It is this constant musing, thinking, remembering, that wears away my mind and body! One cannot kill a man for nothing; one cannot expect to go free!"

As Meresia laid her hands tenderly on the mossy grass, and buried her face in the scent of the flowers, a sudden development of her sensibilities stirred her imagination to hopes of a vast and undefined good—to prospects of a boundless future! The present appeared too narrow for her, and yet no words could have expressed exactly what she desired. For the moment her faults and failings, her very crime itself sank into obscurity, and remained blissfully forgotten. Her eyes lost their mystery, and shone with the joy of childhood, or the anticipation of a possible angelhood. Yet if Meresia had only known, she was committing the greatest fault of all in being conscious of none.

Before her marriage she had never paused to study herself, or to search into her own motives and secret processes. They were the natural outcome of a healthy spirit! Alfonso first taught her to shroud herself in the gloom of melancholy, to feed upon a fevered sensibility, to glorify sin, and thus lowered irredeemably her standard of judgment and action.

Now, during these months of reaction since his death, she had feebly groped her way back to the light, and sought to find out the common mysteries of Nature, to learn something of her soul—something of her end!

There was nothing of the cowering, shuddering criminal in Meresia. She regarded her deed as a circumstance of her life decided by Heaven, and the strength of this conviction brought solace to the hopeless fret of the passing days in which she grew to own herself a murderess, to herself.

Sometimes she felt almost grateful to Aladros for having broken down in her mind the prejudices of education. But for viewing this murder through the medium of his logic, it must indeed appear terrible—appalling!

He boasted a superior intellect, the off-spring of his personal vanity. He never overruled his feelings or desires, and thus, plunging into error, dragged his wife down to his own level, who in silence, "the element in which great things fashion themselves," dared his death, and accomplished the same.

Alone on her primrose bank, Meresia seemed inspired, while a whole series of truths branched out before her vision. All her doubts and hopes, her mistakes, perplexities and mental conflicts, raised her to intercourse with the supernatural world. Mysteriously her spirit appeared in communion with spiritual realities; it was the working of unappeasable desire to investigate the great problems of human nature, human destiny and duty, by the light of a higher power.

So deep was her reverie, so real this lifting up from transitory things, that Meresia neither saw nor heard the approaching steps of Serano and his friend.

The two men paused, involuntarily ceased their talk, and looked upon the picture.

In her plain black dress Meresia appeared singularly girlish and astoundingly beautiful. The sunlight had changed her auburn hair to ruddy rich gold. Her eyes were softened with emotion of an unusual kind, stirred by the inner workings of the soul. She had caught the freshness of the spring day, the purity of the flowers, the anticipation in the atmosphere. As her hands lay lightly on the primrose heads, no one could have dreamt those small white hands were red with crime. As her eyes watched the feathery clouds chasing each other across the blue, few would have thought they had looked on the bitterest side of life; here amid sounds, and colours, and forms, all innocent of guilt.

José marvelled at the enigma. This was the woman who had poisoned her husband; this frail, fair thing on a bed of primroses, with the pensive lips and wistful eyes, she was the lawful prey of the gallows! He would have moved forward to break the spell eagerly, angrily, but his friend held him back.

The sight of Meresia kindled a fire in the stranger's heart that he could not analyse. Perhaps it was merely admiration, the momentary wonder experienced by those who see great natural beauty for the first time on lake or mountain, sea or shore. At first they are breathless, bewildered, but with custom the sensation fades, their dazzled eyes grow clear, and in five minutes they are *blasé* and turn to a fresh scene. Yes, perhaps it was only this.

"Is she a woman or an angel?" he asked Serano.

José's lips curled.

"All women are angels," he said in bitter sarcasm; "but to the eye of reason this is a human vision. She is the widow of Aladros."

"You did not prepare me for so much loveliness. A mere girl, with all her soul in her eyes."

As he spoke Meresia looked up and saw them. She shook off her dreams and sprang to her feet like a frightened animal. It was a rude awakening. Her voice trembled in welcoming them, and touched some kindred chord in the stranger's being that had never been played upon before. The touch kindled warmth and excited rapture.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Brockbank," said José Serano, watching her with his quiet, unchanging eyes, the eyes that to Meresia seemed piercing the outward surface, and dissecting the secret depths within. She turned to the stranger and offered her hand. It was part of her general niceness—Meresia's frank unreserve to strangers.

She saw a man of medium height, with a settled frown on his forehead, that remained through his smiles, which came spontaneously enough in her presence.

His was a face that, in spite of youth, looked wearied by hardships, and provoked by varying passions. A physiognomist would have called him jealous—petulant, but at the same time constant—enduring—a man who would under no circumstances change an opinion once formed, or swerve from a definite purpose.

"We are disturbing your reverie," he said.

Meresia smiled faintly, and glanced back at the impression left among the violets and primroses, crushed by her lounging.

"I am too old to dream," she replied. "Don't you think so, Dr. Serano?"

"Not too old," he answered; "shall we say too experienced? But without a little dreaming, happiness would be wholly lost—life loses its rapture through insensibility. Dream on, Mrs. Aladros, and do not deprive yourself of humanity's best enjoyment."

"I had almost forgotten the past," she said; "you have recalled it. After all, real life betters imagination, for the tales are true, and must needs be interesting if true! Do you know those lines—those very human lines:

"How can one tell which way one's heart may turn?
Back to the old, or for the newer yearn.
We are so young—we have so much to learn!
How can one tell? How can one tell?"

Her voice sank to a whisper. The stranger had never heard so mellow a tone.

"Ah! how, indeed?" he ejaculated.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

Man is Fire.

Life had proved no smooth rose-bed for Herbert Brockbank, and, strangely enough, from his earliest youth he had never expected it to be so. He was a man who breasted his troubles as a strong swimmer meets the waves of the sea—with a certain satisfaction and reckless defiance.

His singularly imprudent nature naturally made his journey through life stormier than it need have been. No love episodes had brightened or clouded the pages of his history till he saw Meresia on that quiet afternoon in the lane amongst the violets. The sight of her was a revelation to the man, and sent the blood coursing to his head as he gazed, silently wondering, and in no way trying to repress his ardour. Herbert Brockbank found it easier to dilate than to compress—hence, doubtless, the mistakes—the falls—of his career.

He had held women but lightly in esteem—as creatures barely worthy of notice. Now, with a mind prone to run to extremes, he glorified Meresia into an ideal of his own creating.

Here, at last, he was permitted to behold humanity in a perfect and delightful form, adorned with beauty, exalted by a rich vigour of thought, enhanced by the charm of a golden, mellow voice. His views were ecstatic, large, generous, so far as Meresia was concerned.

His first impression not only remained, but deepened, turning all that summer day to a dream of unsubstantial beauty. He had read of love upon first seeing, of passion stirred into being at a moment's notice, but he never believed in the truth of these tales. Now, in the twinkling of an eye, the thing had come to pass, was actually with him, proving itself in his own being with a certain mocking conviction.

"Halt, unbeliever!" he pictured Dame Nature saying, "come into the love age of the spring and judge for yourself. I will lift the veil and test your strength. I will show you Meresia in all her glory, and enthrone her as the goddess of your heart, with all her sins, with all her virtues; find them, sort them, keep them, or discard them. There she is, a woman, and nothing more!"

And he had looked—looked with all his eyes, as a blind man who finds light, to whom the brightness of the day has been a mystery since birth—and for the first time sees forms and moving creatures.

The wonder of it awoke him from a low, despondent state, and a new soul kindled in the man. He hardly appeared to himself as the same being, so fresh, tender, and animated were his feelings.

So they walked back to the house together—Meresia and Herbert Brockbank, shadowed by the woman's partner in crime, who left the conversation chiefly to them. In her manner, José marvelled that he could trace no sign of insincerity—no underlying hint of the dark, unforgotten days. Instead, he defined a tenderness of sensibility—a deep enthusiasm with an added charm of romance which coloured her talk and her actions. Elastic in movement, and erect in bearing, her ghastly deed had given her an air of self-reliance, rather than of shrinking. The sweetness of her ways were, he could see, captivating his friend, winning his confidence, warming his hopes, inflaming his passion.

This first meeting was the great root from which all the events of the future were to grow.

Meresia alone was perfectly unconscious of the workings of fate. Her joyousness sprang from the magnetism of the spring, and to the man at her side she was indifferent.

Her first impressions of him were nil, he made no impression at all, perhaps for the reason that after a preliminary glance she hardly looked at him. She talked because all the birds were talking to each other, with prattling sounds that made meaningless music.

Later in the day, when Nature's early closing hours brought back a taste of the winter, Meresia's light-heartedness vanished with the sunshine.

"Where are your spirits?" whispered José, as they stood apart together watching the fading light.

She held the tassel of the window blind between her fingers, and he noticed that they closed upon it suddenly with vehement pressure.

"My spirits go with the sun," she answered. "The whole world is a lifeless page when that has gone. It is the only thing that keeps the corpse out of sight!"

José drew back, then a servant came and shut the shutters.

Meresia took scant time over her toilette for dinner, since it was but the plain black gown of widowhood, and she found the drawing-room empty.

Taking a book, she sank into a low chair, behind a standard lamp.

Presently Herbert Brockbank came down, and seeing that she was unobserved, Meresia remained motionless from apathy.

He crossed to a table and picked up an old photograph of her as a girl, taken in the garden, with her dog in her arms, and the merriment of childhood in her face. He looked at it long and studiously, as if gazing upon something near and dear to him.

Meresia leant forward and spoke with a little catch in her voice.

"That is not me," she said; "not me, at least as I am now."

The man started, and had his face been less brown, he would have flushed a guilty red.

"You have not changed," he replied, "you are just the same."

Meresia smiled scornfully.

"It is a ghost," she said, "that girl died; I buried her long ago, or perhaps she is not the ghost, I am the resurrection of the dead girl, with the same outward form, but not the same spirit."

He laid the picture down.

"Then she no longer interests me," he answered. "Your theory is a true one, Mrs. Aladros—we change—we develop—we bury the old—we give birth to the new—we hurry on the law of Nature by dying a thousand times before the appointed hour. I think life would be less interesting if this were not the case, don't you?"

"I suppose we grow tired of ourselves. We want something different—something new. When we are good we want to be bad, and when we are bad we would give all the world to be good again."

"Beautiful women are a law unto themselves," he replied.

"And so expose their foolishness," added Meresia quickly. "They misunderstand the true rule of life. It is only after abiding by their own laws, and suffering immoderately in consequence, that they learn self-conquest is self-expansion, not self-repression!"

José came into the room as she spoke. Meresia half rose with a little nervous gesture new to her, and dropped the book on her lap.

José picked it up.

"I see you have been reading Rousseau's 'Eloise,'" he said, glancing at the cover.

"Yes. Rousseau is the only French author I have ever read who knows the way to the heart."

José smiled—anyone who observed could have detected a strong-rooted cynicism in the Spaniard's mien. Brockbank had a good eye for character, and summed up the doctor accurately. He saw that Serano had no great respect for his late friend's widow, and yet he divined something of the secret understanding existing between them. It annoyed and irritated him. If José did not love this woman, what else could there be between them, what tie—what private knowledge apart from the world?

The Spaniard was conscious of Brockbank's scrutiny.

"Why do I interest you?" he asked jokingly. "Is my tie crooked, or have I unwittingly offended in any smaller detail?"

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"I was thinking," replied Brockbank, "how rare a thing it is to find a man who has made his fortune through well-doing. Serano saved my life, Mrs. Aladros, when I was down with fever last summer—it is a saying that he has never let a patient die!"

The moment the words passed Herbert Brockbank's lips he would have given worlds to recall them, for in a flash he remembered that Aladros was a patient of this same doctor, and that Serano had actually been in the house at the time of the death.

Meresia broke the awkward pause that naturally followed so ill-advised a remark.

"Is it a very rare thing to make money by honest means?" she said, and her voice had lost none of its sweetness.

"I have only to quote a Spanish proverb in answer to that question," replied José with alacrity.

"Oh! I know your Spanish proverbs," Meresia declared; "they are all terribly cynical. By them a nation may be judged out of its own mouth. You can tell the character of a people better by their proverbs than by horoscopes, palmistry, or reading the forehead, the eyes, or even the nose, which betrays much!"

"Fancy reading a nose!" laughed José. "But I won't rob Brockbank of the superior Spanish wisdom, 'Renounce the Devil, and thou shalt wear a shabby coat.' So the only way to success is, according to native logic, through the Gate of Hell. Remember, please, I was educated in England, and I am no believer in the favourite sayings of my mother tongue, for this latter leads to only two things: be 'either rich or hanged.'"

Meresia turned a shade paler, but the crimson lamp concealed this. She did not trust herself to speak, for the very word "hanged" paralysed her faculties.

"This is not absolutely a cynic's pessimism," José continued, "which I can prove by the fact that 'the poorer houses contain the most honest people.' But words will not convince Mrs. Aladros. She does not believe even in deeds, resembling in that particular instance, the Spaniard's maiden aunt, to whom this same assertion is affixed."

"Your countrymen are very narrow-minded," said Meresia, finding her voice with an effort; "they reduce their study of human nature to a limited formula."

"One hundred tailors, one hundred millers, one hundred weavers—three hundred thieves! There is arithmetic for you!"

Meresia laughed scornfully, but it was a forced laugh, with no ring of mirth in its melody.

"That proverb has stood the test of centuries," murmured José.

"I see no error in it, but here are your good parents, Mrs. Aladros; let us bury our profane sayings with the advent of dinner."

The gong sounded as he spoke, and Meresia rose wearily—yet glad to escape the scathing cynicism of the Spanish doctor.

But the evening had barely begun, and the torture of the coming hours was still undreamt of. It was not till long after they had again returned from the dining-room that a chance whisper from Serano set Meresia's nerves tingling with fear, and painfully hastened the beating of her heart. He had asked her to show him some rare plant in the lighted conservatory that led from the hall, and Meresia—all ignorant of what was to follow—readily assented.

Herbert Brockbank, detained in conversation by Mr. Milford, watched the departing figures with envious eyes and jealous suspicions.

Perhaps, after all, he had been mistaken, and Serano loved this woman. Men frequently love the women they least respect when their beauty is such as Meresia's. So he soliloquised, and answered his host vaguely.

"When are you coming back to town?" asked José Serano somewhat abruptly of Mrs. Aladros.

She paused, surprised at a certain command in his tone, though it was but a question.

"I don't know."

"Next week?"

"I don't know."

The monotony of the replies annoyed him. He tapped his foot impatiently on the floor.

"Take my advice; return quickly—as early in the week as possible—and come straight to my house. I cannot talk to you here; I only came to-day to give you the hint. It may be necessary for you to leave England next week."

Meresia tottered back, white to her lips and trembling.

"To leave England!" she gasped. "Great Heaven!"

"Don't be frightened. There is no danger for you if you follow my directions to the letter; but if you fail——"

He shrugged his shoulders, with a gesture peculiarly terrifying to the woman.

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake, am I suspected?"

"Hush!"

They stepped back against a large flowering azalea, till Meresia's slight figure was almost lost in the white loveliness of prolific bloom.

Someone was crossing the hall and walking towards the conservatory. A moment later, and Herbert Brockbank, who had escaped his host, came eagerly in search of Mrs. Aladros.

The sight of José and Meresia confirmed his fears. This was undoubtedly an arranged meeting. They were neither of them looking at the rare plant on the opposite side, but each had a set purpose written on their faces. The woman was trembling, the man had his hand on her arm, and their conversation ceased abruptly as Herbert Brockbank entered.

They joined him hurriedly, Meresia unable to conceal her agitation, the more that the stranger's eyes gazed unsparingly upon her distress.

She excused herself on the plea of fatigue, and went early to bed. Serano's words were burning into her brain—torturing her by their brevity and vagueness. What fresh terror, what fatal development had come to light? It seemed so easy—with Serano's aid—and now her sin had found her out. He spoke of her having to leave England That must mean fleeing from justice, with the bloodhounds ever on her track, and the penalty to pay!

She crept to bed—the criminal at last—with evil shadows building unsubstantial gallows and half-realised torments in the dark atmosphere, heavy with threatening spirits surrounding her in gradually thickening throng, till with reeling senses she fell back fainting from fear on the pillows of her girlhood.

In truth, the old Meresia was dead, the guileless, innocent Meresia, who had dreamt youth's happy dreams in that same unaltered room. The new tenant was a woman with a sin upon her soul, and she held nothing in common with the girl of past days.

"I want to speak to you alone," said Brockbank to Serano.

"Come to my room, I am at your service," replied the Doctor lightly. "Now, what have you to say?"

"It's about Mrs. Aladros. Is she a free woman, or are you——"

José stopped the sentence with a harsh laugh.

"Good gracious, Brockbank, you surely don't intend to go in for her yourself?"

"I merely asked if she were free."

"That is a large word! Are beautiful women ever free? But if you respect yourself, my dear fellow, don't burn your wings at her candle. Man is fire, woman is tow, and the Devil comes with the bellows. Be warned in time!"

"Warned!" he muttered, "I did not come to be warned, Serano. Good-night."

"Good-night, Brockbank."

(To be continued.)

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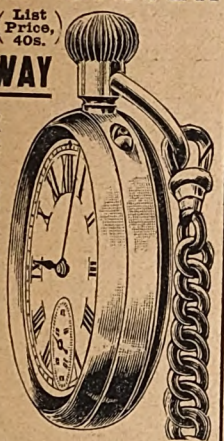

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THE result of the 1897 Coupon Collecting Competition will be found in *Pearson's Weekly* dated January 29th.

IGNORAMUS writes to ask if the temperature of a large town is any higher when all the street lamps are lit than during the daytime.————Yes, it makes a material difference, naturally.

P. H.—writes: "What is the origin of the expression 'scot-free'?"————Scot is the equivilent of the Anglo-Saxon word "sceat," meaning taxation; therefore "scot-free," originally meant "free from the payment of taxes," and now it has become a general expression for freedom from anything.

PAUL.—America is America to all the world, and is pronounced in the same way except in France, where it becomes Amérique.

D. D. wants to know why donkeys have such a strong objection to crossing running water.————The wild ass is very fond of saline herbage and drinks brackish water only. Being unaccustomed to running water, he naturally looks upon it with suspicion. *Ergo*, by the natural law of heredity, his domesticated descendant would, in all probability, inherit the aversion.

M.G.B.—Almost any Italian title can be bought by paying enough for it. A dukedom is somewhat costly, its price reaching as high as £3,200.

U. L. S.—It is quite a mistake to suppose that blinkers are an essential part of a horse's equipment. They merely became fashionable owing to the pride of persons who imagined their horses presented a finer appearance with these appendages, and custom and ignorance combined have perpetuated their use. It is the *unseen* object which terrifies a horse. The animal who will became unmanageable when made to turn away from an approaching train will quietly stand its ground if allowed to face the object.

Q.—The number of people who have lived upon this earth since the time of Adam is calculated to be somewhere about 36,627,844,600,000,000,

H. H.—Taking all the year round, the coldest hour of the twenty-four is five o'clock in the morning.

D. S.—It is quite true that giraffes are now almost priceless. They were once to be bought for £40 each, now a good one would fetch over £1,000. The Jardin d'Acclimatation of Paris some time ago refused to sell three very young ones for £2,000. Elephants, on the contrary, range from between £160 to £480.

W. W.—Yes, there is such a thing as a yearly paper, and only one; that is the *Esquimaux Bullelin*, and it is the only journal published within the Arctic Circle.

S. C. W. wants to know if rainbows are ever seen anywhere else but in the air.————Yes; they may often be noticed in the spray of fountains and of waterfalls. They are sometimes seen on the surface of the sea, and upon wet meadows lying opposite to the sun.

T. H.—The eye is the first feature to show the approach of old age in man, by the fading of the colour at the circumference of the cornea.

R. D.—The wines of ancient times were quite different to our modern wines. They were simply the product of fermentation, like our home-made currant wine or cider. Your friend is quite right in supposing that they contained alcohol, and could intoxicate if taken in sufficient quantity, but it was only a very small amount, many having none at all, and the strongest of all only twelve per cent.

A. G. M. is in the habit of catching very severe colds, accompanied by violent fits of sneezing, which, as he says, "is most embarrassing when in a crowded railway carriage or omnibus."————Perhaps the common remedy of tightly pressing the upper lip with the finger when you feel a sneeze coming on would meet your case. At all events, you might try it.

F. B. wants to know if negro babies are born black.————No. At birth a negro infant is of a reddish nut-brown colour, which turns to slatey-grey by the time it is a week old. It does not become black for a period varying from one to three years, according to the nature of the locality and the influence of the climate.

MOLAR is anxious to know the reason one's double teeth decay before the single ones.————For two reasons. In the first place, the double teeth have more work to do; nearly all the work of mastication falls upon them, which causes the enamel to wear away, thus exposing the dentine to the injurious action of the saliva and the various acids of the mouth. In the second place, the enamel is proportionately thicker on the single teeth than it is on the double.

W. B. S.—An "artel" is a Russian institution, a kind of syndicate, in fact, amongst the working men of that country. A certain number of mechanics of all descriptions join together, forming gangs, and undertake such work as railway making, dock work, agricultural work, and all kinds of skilled artisans' trades, and then share the profits between them.

S. H.—The most northerly town in the world is Hammerfest in Norway.

AN IRISHMAN wants to know why the first thing people usually do after a great mental shock is to put their hands to their heads.————Because that is where the brain is, or should be, and the brain is the headquarters of all sensation—more especially the fore-brain. It receives impressions from all parts of the body, and every sensation communicates with it, so that when a sudden shock is experienced, the disturbance is so great as to cause pain, and the hand naturally goes to the part where the pain is felt, in order to afford relief.

RODERICK.—No, the Duke of York would not inherit the title of Prince of Wales, in the event of H.R.H. dying before his mother, the Queen. Only an eldest son is entitled to be a Prince of Wales, and he is made so by Royal patent. Should Queen Victoria survive her son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the title would most probably fall into abeyance.

S. L. D.—The tolling of church bells on the occasion of a burial, is based on the old Pagan custom of banging gongs when a body was to be interred in order to scare away the bad spirits that were supposed to haunt the dead man in order to secure him for the lower regions.

F. M. D.—I am indeed sorry to hear that you are such a martyr to asthma. Have you seen those new patent pocket inhalers?—a most useful little article for anyone who suffers from difficulty in breathing to carry about with them, especially during the foggy weather we have had so much of this season. I believe they are obtainable from Mr. Booth, of 11c Farringdon Avenue, E.C., for the sum of five shillings.

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GIGANTIC CLEARANCE SALE.

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THE ENORMOUS STOCK OF CARPETS, CURTAINS, SHEETS, BLANKETS, QUILTS, &C., MUST BE CLEARED WITHOUT REGARD TO COST, OWING TO THE L.C.C. REQUIRING PRESENT PREMISES FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS.

New Premises having to be acquired by us, this Sale is held in order to Clear Out Heavy Stocks previous to the removal. NEW GOODS have to be sacrificed, together with all Regular Stocks, as it would be almost impossible to remove the Valuable and Heavy Stocks to New Premises without great risk and loss by damage to the Goods in transit, and this renders AN ABSOLUTE CLEARANCE IMPERATIVE. The magnificent opportunity is therefore afforded the readers of *Short Stories* of buying the NEW SEASON'S GOODS that are just coming in fresh from the looms at prices lower than the cost of production; and in many cases the Goods are being offered at less than HALF PRICE.

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The BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO. strongly advise intending purchasers to send on orders at once to prevent disappointment. Orders by post must be accompanied with cuttings from this advertisement for lots required, and will receive the same attention as customers attending our warehouses, and will be executed strictly in rotation on the same day as received.

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 48in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.**

7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. — Lot 2.—7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. per pair, measuring 3½yd. long, by 52in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges and handsome double borders; wash easily. 3 pairs for 11s. 3d. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 3.—Specially handsome Drawing-room Design, entirely new and most successful. In white or cream, with scolloped and taped edges, made from thoroughly sound cotton yarns; warranted to wear well. Sale price, 5s. 11d. per pair. Each curtain measures 3½yd. long by 60in. wide. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 17s. Money returned if not approved. — **10s. 6d. Lace Curtains for 5s 11d.**

Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths**, made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.
Size 54in. by 45in., price 1s. 2d. each, or 3 for 3s. 3d.
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Size 68in. by 62in., price 2s. 2d. each, or 3 for 5s. 11d.

Lot 22.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned. — **10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.**

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Lot. 24.—800 pairs of best quality Witney Blankets, with fancy borders, very soft, warm, of great durability. Made from the best wool, and warranted to give every satisfaction. Prices given below are little more than half the original cost.

Size	Weight.	Price per Pair.	3 Pairs for
53in. by 70in.	4lb.	6s. 3d.	18s.
60in. by 80in.	6lb.	7s. 9d.	22s.
70in. by 90in.	8lb.	11s. 6d.	33s.
75in. by 96in.	9lb.	13s. 0s.	37s.
80in. by 99in.	10lb.	15s. 3d.	43s.
86in. by 104in.	11lb.	16s. 9d.	48s.

Lot 20.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 81in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.**

15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d. — Lot 21.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 90in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved. — **3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.**

3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d. — Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

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GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

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The Countess of Selkirk would thank the British Carpet Co. to send her another Carpet, similar to the one she got from them a fortnight ago, which is most satisfactory.

1 Tyne View Villas, St. Helens, I. of W.
Lady Ida Lowe begs to inform the British Carpet Co. that she is so much pleased with the two Carpets and Two Rugs they sent her a week ago that she begs them to send her, to the above address, two more similar Carpets and Rugs.

SPECIAL NOTE! This offer is made to the readers of this paper, owing to premises being required by the London County Council for Street Improvements. All Goods must be Cleared, Regardless of Cost.

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ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

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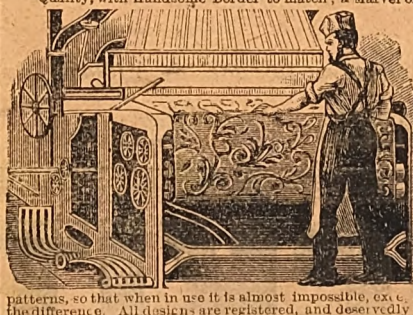

Lot 60.

No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9 0 by	6 0	5/6	9/0
2	9 0 by	7 6	7/0	11/9
3	9 0 by	9 0	8/6	13/6
4	10 6 by	7 6	8/9	13/9
5	10 6 by	9 0	10/0	15 6
6	12 0 by	9 0	11/6	18/0
7	12 0 by	10 6	13/6	20/6
8	13 6 by	10 6	15/3	24/0
9	12 0 by	12 0	15/3	24/0
10	13 6 by	12 0	17/0	27/0
11	15 0 by	12 0	19/0	32/0
12	18 0 by	12 0	22/0	36/0

These Carpets are splendid imitations of real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. All designs are registered, and deservedly considered works of art. We can confidently recommend them for use in the dining and drawing rooms, or any rooms and landings where hard wear is a necessity.

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I have seen some of the Carpets and rugs sent by your firm, and think they are really a marvel. Please forward goods as follows, etc.—Yours faithfully, Rev. F. H. MAY.

"SHORT STORIES" COUPON.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. for amount we guarantee to send any goods as above.
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Invaluable to persons of weak digestion.

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GRAND WAR STORY BEGINS TO-DAY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 475. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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But mention SHORT STORIES.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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HOVIS is baked and sold by all good class Bakers. No loaf genuine unless stamped HOVIS. 6d. and 1/- samples of Bread and Biscuits sent on receipt of stamps by

S. FITTON & SON, Millers, Macclesfield.

MAKE FRUIT WINES AT HOME.
Ask for MASON'S.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. THE VERY BEST.

MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE.
A Sixpenny Bottle will, in six minutes, make sixty glasses of Delicious, Non-Alcoholic Wine.
Agents Wanted.
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.
MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger, Lemon, Orange, Blackberry, etc.
YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

The Best Hair Dye

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d. 5s. 6d. & 10s. 6d.

A sum of from 10/- to 20/- per week offered for spare time to either sex everywhere. Work can be done evenings. Send addressed envelope to Box 60, Eclipse Works, 89, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

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DEVONSHIRE CREAM.
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In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., 10d.; 1lb., 1s. 4d.; 1½lb., 2s. 4d.; including tin and postage.
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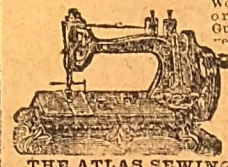

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£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Illd. Guide (250 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. No accountants. Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers.

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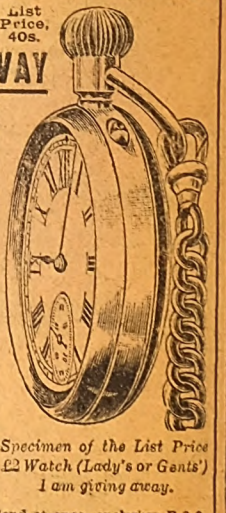
List Price, 40s.



to every person who carries out the conditions mentioned in our Catalogue of further wonderful bargains, for which you must send. In sending for it enclose 1/6 (no prize price) for one of our handsome Rich Star Diamond 18-ct. Gold-cased Half Hoop Rings equal in appearance to one costing £5 5s. At same time state whether you require Lady's or Gents' Watch. This is NO SWINDLE, and I am not an AMATEUR Watchmaker, but an experienced Watch Manufacturer and Diamond Merchant. Send at once. You will be delighted. If not, money will be returned. The Watch is warranted for 5 years, and is sent post free on your complying with our conditions. Send at once, enclosing P.O.O. 1/6 for ring and offer of watch. Send string size of finger. Address:

Specimen of the List Price £2 Watch (Lady's or Gents') I am giving away.

W. W. WADE,
Dept. 6, Gold Exchange, Hammersmith, LONDON W.

DR. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL SOAP.

Deliciously and expensively perfumed, the most luxurious Soap in the World. Produces a most lovely complexion, eradicates spots, pimples, and all imperfections, makes the skin exquisitely clear, and produces the healthy bloom so much desired. It is absolutely harmless, and each tablet is accompanied by a medical certificate.

6d. & 1s. PER TABLET.

It is Soap prevents the growth of superfluous hairs, removes wrinkles, lessens the skin. You can get it at all the Stores and first-class Chemists. *The Family Doctor* says it is the most economical beautifier known to Modern Dermatology. It clears away all pimples, spots, redness, or roughness, and makes the skin smooth and clear as a baby's. Use it in the bath and for all Toilet purposes; it is most delicious. For irritable or sensitive skins it is matchless and delightfully soothing.

MADAME PATTI sends her best thanks for Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap, which she finds most excellent.—Craig-y-nos Castle, South Wales.

Use also Dr. MACKENZIE'S "ARSICAL" Face Lotion. *Beware of many Imitations. Have Dr. MACKENZIE'S or none.*

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 475.] For the Week ending February 5th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

A New Serial Story] [*Starts to-day.*

THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATIONS AND A MAN.

As all the world knows, the Children's Ball of the Lady Mayoress takes place yearly on the night of "Twelfth Day," January 6th, at the Mansion House. In the year '98 the function was even more successful than usual, owing to Sir Henry Burdett's fine idea that the children in their fancy dresses should be photographed in support of the Prince of Wales' Hospital Fund. The little Walter Raleighs, the tiny Amy Robsarts, and the white-robed angels in miniature, flocked in gaudy throngs to the specially-fitted-up photographer's studio adjoining the grand *salon* of the Mansion House; while all that wide space outside between the Mansion House, the Bank, and the Stock Exchange was a mere mass of waiting, arriving, and departing vehicles.

If anything tended to take a little of their exuberance from this and other New Year jubilations (so far as the older heads were concerned, at least), it was a certain cloudiness in the political sky; nothing very definite, nothing terrifying; yet something so real, that nearly everyone felt it with disquiet. An Irish member, celebrated for his "bulls," was heard to say: "Take my word for it, there's going to be a sun-set in the East." Men strolled into their clubs, and said, with or without a yawn: "Is there going to be a row, then?" Someone might answer: "Not a bit of it; it'll pass off presently, you'll see." But another would be sure to add: "Things are looking black enough, all the same."

It was just as when, on a clear day at sea, low and jagged edges of disconnected clouds appear inkily on the horizon-edge, and no one is quite certain whether or not they will meet, and whelm the sky, and sink the ship.

But the horizon had hardly darkened, when again it cleared. The principal cause of fear had been what had looked uncommonly like a conspiracy of the three great Continental Powers to act in concert in ousting England from her predominance in the East. First there was the seizure of Kiao-chau, and the bombastic farewells of the two German Royal brothers; then immediately the aggressive attitude of Russia at Port Arthur, and her demand that a Russian should take the place of Mr. MacLeavy Brown as Controller of the Corean Finances; then immediately the startling rumour that France had seized Hainan, was sending an expedition to exploit Yun-nan, and had two ships of the line in Hoi-How harbour.

All this had decidedly the look of concert between the Powers concerned; for within the last few years it had got to be more and more clearly recognised by the British public that centuries of neighbourhood on the Continent had fostered among the Continental nations a certain spirit of kinship, in which the Island-Kingdom was no sharer.

In the course of years the Straits of Dover had widened into an ocean. Europe had receded from Britain, and Britain, in her pride, had drawn back from Europe. From the curl of the moustache, to the colour and cut of the evening-dress, to the manner in which women held up their skirts, there was similarity between French and German, between German and Russian and Austrian, and dissimilarity between all these and English.

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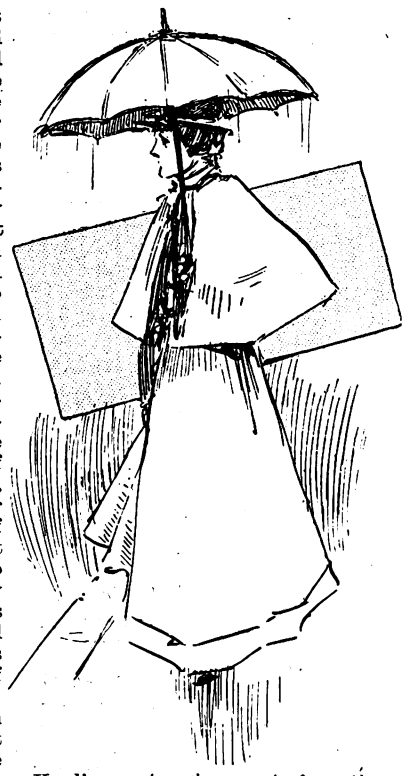
It is true that the Russian hated the German, and the German the Russian and the French; but their hatred was the hatred of brothers of the same family, always ready to combine against the outsider in case of need. All this had begun to be suspected, then definitely recognised, by the British nation. Alone and friendless must England tread the wine-press of modern history, solitary in her majesty; and if ever an attempt were made to stop her stately progress, she was prepared to find that her foe was the rest of Europe.



Her lips went up in a pout of vexation.

But very soon after the unrest caused by the activities of the three nations in China had arisen, it began to subside. France denied the annexation of Hainan; the semi-official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, inspired by Wilhelm, painted Germany as the patron of peaceful commerce, with an amiable weakness for theatrical displays; Russia was defeated in the matter of the removal of Mr. MacLeavy Brown, and seemed sufficiently limp after it; while the spirits of everyone were raised by the probable guarantee of a Chinese loan of sixteen millions by the British Government—a step certain to secure the unchallenged predominance of England in the commerce and politics of China.

But, meanwhile, at the children's fancy ball at the Mansion House on the night of the 6th of January, events were working in a quite different direction to that of peaceful settlement.

Ada Seward was the presiding deity in the nursery of Mrs. Pattison, of Fulham. On the night of the 6th, Dr. and Mrs. Pattison had to be present at a ball in the West-end, and Ada on that night was busy; for it was necessary for her, first of all to convey Master Johnnie Pattison, costumed as Francis I., to the Mansion House; and then to hurry homeward again to take Miss Nellie Pattison to a children's evening with charades in South Kensington.

The fact that it was wet when she reached the Mansion House may have had something to do with her after troubles. The landing-place was occupied by some other carriages, and dismounting with her charge, with an umbrella over him, she cried to the coachman in a hurried and indistinct manner through the drizzle:

"Wait till I come back."

The man afterwards declared that he understood her to say:

"Go away, and come back."

At any rate, when Ada again came forth into the crush of the carriages to look for the Pattison brougham, it was nowhere to be found.

And now her lips went up in a pout of vexation. "What on earth is anyone to do now?" she said. She was pressed for time, and yet at a loss.

The throng of private carriages seemed to have banished all cabs from the region of the Mansion House. She looked, and saw none; then she looked into her pocket, and found only sixpence. These two circumstances decided her against the cab. Instead, she ran a few yards, dodging among the carriages, and at the entrance to Poultry, skipped into a moving 'bus.

She sat in a corner for about five minutes, with agonised glances out of the door at the slowly receding clocks. Then someone—a man sitting nearly opposite, whom she had not noticed—addressed her:

"Why, Miss Ada, is that you?"

"Oh!" she cried, "Mr. Brabant, is that you? It's a long time since—how are you?"

"Well, I'm pretty fair, Miss Ada, as times go, you know. Hope you are the same."

"Still in the army?"

"Oh, yes—the 23rd, as ever. B Company, you know. You living in London now?"

"Yes—at Fulham."

Here conversation flagged; and in that minute's interval, Brabant, with a sudden half-turn to his left, said:

"Just allow me to introduce you to my friend here—Miss Seward—Dr. Yen How."

In the light of the 'bus lamp Ada Seward saw a very small man, dressed in European clothes, yet a man whom she at once took to be Chinese. With a wrinkled grin, he put out his hand and shook hers.

He was a man of remarkable visage. When his hat was off one saw that he was nearly bald, and that his expanse of brow was simply majestic. There was something brooding, meditative, in the meaning of his long and narrow eyes, and there was a brown, and dark, and specially dirty shade in the yellow tan of his skin.

He was not really a Chinaman—or rather, he was that, and more. He was the son of a Japanese father by a Chinese woman. He combined these antagonistic races in one man. In Dr. Yen How was the East.

He was of noble feudal descent, and at Tokio, but for his Chinese blood, would have been styled Count. Not that the admixture of blood was very visible in his appearance; in China he passed for a Chinese, and in Japan for a Jap.

If ever man was cosmopolitan, that man was Dr. Yen How. No European could be more familiar with the *minutiæ* of Western civilisation. His degree of doctor he had obtained at the University of Heidelberg; for years he had practised as a specialist in the diseases of women and children at San Francisco.

He possessed an income of a thousand *tael* (about £300) from a tea-farm; but his life had been passed in the practice of the grinding industry of a slave. Nothing equalled his assiduity, his minuteness, his attention to detail. He had once written to the Royal Observatory at the Cape pointing out a trifling error in a long logarithmic calculation of the declension of one of the moons of Jupiter, originating from the observatory.

In the East he could have climbed at once, almost without effort, to the very top of the tree—even in the West he might have done it, had he chosen. But he chose to lie low, remaining unnoticed, studying, observing, making of himself an epitome of the West, as he was an embodiment of the East.

In whatever country he happened to be—and he was never for very many years in any one—he was most often to be found in the company of people of the lower classes, and of these he had a very intimate knowledge. So great was his mental breadth, that he was unable to sympathise in the least with either Eastern or Western distinctions of class and rank. He often struck up chance friendships with soldiers and sailors about the capitals of Europe; and these patronised and exhibited him here and there.

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Yen How knew that he was being patronised, and submitted to it—and smiled meekly.

He had two great defects—his shortness of sight, which caused him to wear rather big-lensed spectacles; and his inability, in speaking without effort, to pronounce the word "little." He still called it "lillee."

On the date of January 6th, when he drove westward in the 'bus with Brabant and Ada Seward, he was perhaps forty years of age, but he might have been anything, to judge from his appearance, between sixteen and sixty; a hard, omniscient, cosmopolitan little bundle of a man, tough as oak, dry as chips.

Yet in that head were leavening some big thoughts, and his heart was capable of tremendous passions.

In reality, could one have known it, as he fared onward through the fog and drizzle in the trundling and homely 'bus, smiling behind his big spectacles, he was the most important personage in London, or perhaps in the world.

Dr. Yen How was capable of anything. In him was the stoic, and the cynic, and the tiger; with a turn of the mind he could become a *savant*, or a statesman, or a crossing-sweeper, or a general. He possessed this excellence: a clear brain.

By one of those extraordinary freaks of nature for which there is no accounting, this strange man wanted to see Ada Seward a second time after parting with her that night. Brabant, who had known her formerly in her native town of Cheltenham, accompanied her to the gate of the Pattison villa, Yen How with them.

As he was leaving her, the little doctor put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered hurriedly:

"I will wait here to-morrow night at eight for *one lillee kiss.*"

The girl was astounded.

"Well, the idea!" she just gasped.

Before she could definitely proclaim her indignation, the two men had turned off.

Till he reached his home in Portland Street that night, Yen How was engaged in one long, continuous, secret smile—a smile at his own expense. This outburst of his in the *rôle* of lover was new to him, absolutely. His whole relations with women hitherto had consisted in the business of curing their sicknesses. By what subtle physiological or psychological affinity this one particular English girl had been able to evoke from this particular dry Chino-Japanese a request for "one lillee kiss," he was utterly unable to divine. Such an affinity there undoubtedly was, but its origin lay among reasons far too abstruse for the unravelling of Yen, or of anyone else in fact.

Yen How smiled that first night, but he presently found that this was no smiling matter.

At eight the next evening he was duly at the Pattison gate, but, alas, no Ada was to be seen. Ada, however, was there, though invisible. She, with the Pattison cook, whom she had brought out to enjoy the fun, was hiding behind a shrubbery, and, peering through, shaking with laughter at the futile waiting of the little doctor.

And now Yen How, for the first time in his life, began to suffer on account of a woman.

He loved; and in his love was the concentrated passion of a thousand other men. Melted rock is lava—and he suffered.

He used to hang about the house for hours, day after day, waiting. To his patience there was no end—to his resolution to possess her, by fair means or foul, no end. That one face, by day, by night, was "always before his eyes"—so the old knights used to say when they loved princesses far above them. But Yen How's love was a British nursemaid, and his torment was very much more real and intense than that of any of the verse-writing troubadours.

Even in the matter of love the Eastern is essentially different from the Western. It is impossible for us, in anything, to understand them fully, so utterly foreign are they. With us love is frequent, and is merely a powerful mood; with them, when it rarely happens to seize them, the whole nature of the man is involved, and love becomes a passion having all the characteristics of ordinary flame.

One day, as he lurked about, he met her in the street returning from some shopping. By this time Yen How had become a standing joke for Ada in the kitchen and the servants'-bedroom. He walked up to her.

"Ah," he said with sideward head, and a cajoling smile, "you are here, then? You will give poor Yen How one lillee kiss?"

The whole idea of courtship possessed by this clownish and unpractised lover consisted in asking for one little kiss. Ada Seward's views of the matter were more elaborate. She despised his strong simplicity.

He was duly at the Pattison gate.

"Perhaps you are not aware who it is you are talking to," she said with dignity.

Yen was aware; he could have shut his eyes and drawn an exact picture of her face.

"Ah!" he said; "not even one lillee——"

"I'll give you one lillee box of soap to wash your face, if you like!" she cried, running and looking back. The house was near; he could not overtake her.

Perhaps it would have been impossible for Miss Seward to utter any set of words more calculated to drive Yen to madness than this heartless reference to "soap." If his suit was hopeless, it was now borne in upon him that it was hopeless on account of his race. The girl did not listen to him, and then reject him; she rejected him without taking him into consideration at all. It was as though a mule, or a cat, had asked her to be his.

But his persistence did not fail. He flung all his other

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pursuits to the wind, and the Pattison villa became for him the centre of the world. Sometimes he caught heavenly glimpses of her. Once again he met her in the street, and once again she overwhelmed him with jeers. So passed January, February, and March.

At the beginning of April he stood one night outside the Pattison gate, waiting as usual, when he saw her. It was after eleven o'clock; she was coming home from the theatre, leaning on the arm of Private Brabant. Brabant, since their meeting in the 'bus, had several times been "out" with her.

As the two approached the gate, Ada saw the little doctor.

"There's that little Chinaman again, John," she said, pressing Brabant's arm. "It's getting too much of a good thing now, isn't it?"

"Confound the little rat," said Brabant, "he wants his nut cracked, I should think, doesn't he?"

The doctor tripped up to them, smiling nervously. Before he could speak Brabant, who had had a glass, said:

"Come, come, Mr. Yen How, get out of this. Can't you see the young lady doesn't want you fooling round her?"

"Well—but—my soldier-friend," said Yen, "there is no harm done——"

"Come, get out of it!" said Brabant more roughly.

"No, no, you go too fast, you see," began Yen apologetically.

"Are you going—yes or no?" said Brabant, now flushing angrily.

"Go away, why don't you?" put in Ada.

"Ah! I—I am here to see my lillee girl," hazarded Yen.

"Oh, don't be a stupid little goose of a Chinaman! Just fancy!" she said.

This was the most unkindest cut of all for poor Yen How. He winced, touched with anger.

"Are you going or not?" said Brabant, with an ultimatum in his tone.

"No!" said Yen; then, more decidedly, "no, no!"

Brabant put out his arm and pushed him on the shoulder.

It was not a violent push, but in an instant the doctor's face was almost black with rage. He had in his hand a stout bamboo stick, which he at once lifted and slashed with terrible force across the soldier's cheek, leaving a bruised weal which Brabant bore visibly with him to the grave.

In retaliation the soldier lifted his large and bony fist, and sent it with crushing vehemence into the doctor's face. Yen How dropped, bleeding.

The street was deserted. Not knowing what to do, the girl and the soldier bent over him for about five minutes, when, to their surprise, Yen How raised himself slowly, placed his handkerchief against his red and dripping face, and slowly limped away without a single word.

Once he stopped deliberately as he moved off, turned, and looked at them; and in the moonlight they distinctly saw him twice shake his forefinger warningly in their direction.

Then he went on his way.

Between that night and the beginning of May he never once stepped outside the house in which he lived. He had resumed his close and far-reaching studies.

At the beginning of May he was on board the *Peninsular*, bound for the East.

By the end of July he was a member of the Japanese Parliament.

In November we find him a leading spirit in the *Tsung-li-Yamen*, or Chinese Foreign Office, and making frequent voyages between Tokio and Pekin.

CHAPTER II.

The Heathen Chinee.

Yen How was nothing if not heathen. He was that first of all.

His intellect was like dry ice; he not only had no religious belief, but he despised all religions—the faiths of the West, the superstitions of the East, he despised them all alike. He was full of light, but without a hint of warmth; and so lacked the religious sense.

It is not likely that ordinary ethical considerations would have much influence in checking the aims of such a man. He was like an avalanche, as cold, and as resistless.

What was Dr. Yen How's aim? Simply told, it was to possess Ada Seward, ultimately, and after all.

If the earth had opened and swallowed him, then he would have renounced his hope; but for no lesser reason. He went coolly and patiently to work to secure her.

But no man, surely, ever employed means so huge and complex to an end so small. A European, or perhaps any other man, having once conceived the means, would very quickly have forgotten the end in the tremendous interest of the means themselves. But in all that Yen did the face of Ada Seward was always consciously "before his eyes." The nature of this man was as simple as the elemental rock.

His career in the East, from the first hour of his return, was meteoric. He rose like a rocket. The order of the day in China, and especially in Japan, was Western modernity: and here was a man who simply breathed Western modernity, and who yet was an Eastern of the Easterns. His skin was more yellow than the yellow man's, and his brain was more white than the white man's. When Professor Jepp, the Inspector-General of Roads and Bridges at Tokio, asserted that the Imperial tax in Britain on railway passenger-traffic was, he believed, £3 per cent., Yen How's face wrinkled up into a very chaos of smiles. "No—two," he said quietly; and no one had the least doubt which was right. Yen introduced a new method of protecting bridges from collapse during the almost daily earthquakes of Japan, by means of articulated joists and sleepers. When Dr. Hirsch, the Naval Director at Pekin, introduced a specification for a new battle-ship to be mounted with two 111-ton guns, Yen proved by statistics (which he quoted from memory), that the tendency of the most modern ship-building was rather in the direction of quick-firing and machine-guns, than of heavy armaments. The 111-ton became 67-ton. He was soon invaluable.

About the beginning of the year a new Ministry had been formed in Tokio, and immediately afterwards dissolved; whereupon the Marquis Ito had undertaken to organise a Cabinet and assume the reins. At this time, the people of Japan were strongly excited against what they called the free-booting of Russia and Germany in China, and equally strongly animated in favour of the claims of England in that country. England was, in fact, the *beau ideal*, the object of imitation, the Great Pattern, of Japan. It required no great force of imagination for her to call herself "the Britain of the East"; this notion at once occurred, of itself, to everyone, and, of course, the copyist sympathised with her original rather than with others. With England predominant in China, moreover, there would be an assurance of free trade; and Japan was a trader. So strong was the enthusiasm in favour of England in consequence of these facts, that the nation was even willing to put its whole fleet at the disposal of its Big Model in case of need.

The *ulterior* purposes of Japan, of course, remained in doubt. She was even then building in various parts of the world an enormous additional fleet, which, when finished, would make her a sea power far in advance of any nation in the whole earth, with the exception of England herself. What in the hour of her manhood, when she had cast away her leading-strings, she would do with this vast force was a disturbing question to many; but, meanwhile, it was clearly her intention to use England as an ally—till the years ripened.

Under the Marquis Ito's Ministry Yen How was offered a post of Under-Secretary, but he refused it. He suggested that he should become secretary to the Minister as his private servant; and this was arranged. He knew that high public

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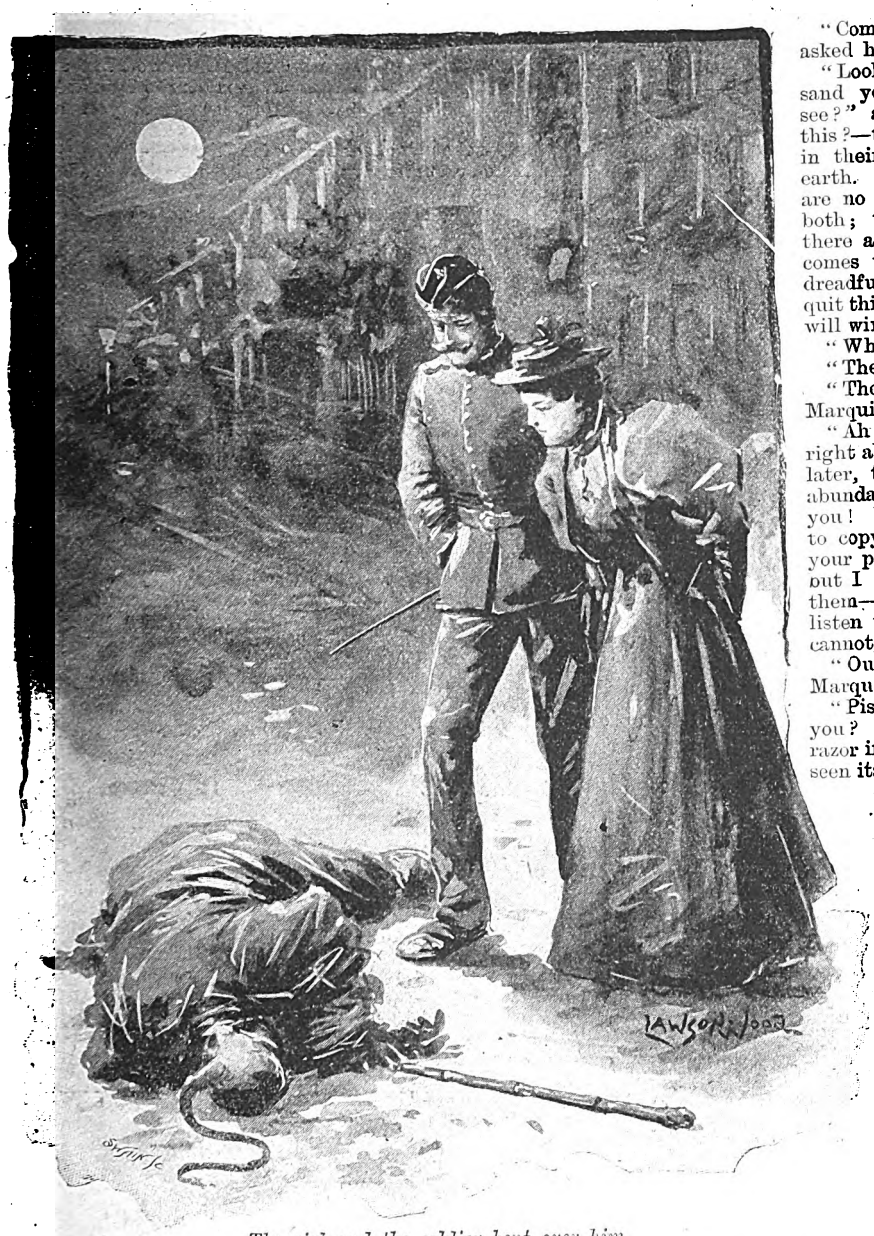

The girl and the soldier bent over him.

rank in Japan would exclude him from high public rank in China, if ever his double personality should become known—and China, for the present, was the chief field of his labours. Meanwhile, he was drawing large revenues as a mandarin, and lived, for his own purposes, in a style nearly princely.

"Pooh!" he said to the Marquis Ito, sipping tea among rugs in his courtyard with the cosiness of the Geisha girl—"there are no statesmen now. Statesmen!—there are no such things. Not here—not in Europe. An ordinary man is a man who thinks in days; a statesman proper thinks in thousands of years. The outlook and computations of a statesman should be as much vaster than those of a private person, as a country is vaster than a tea-house. Believe me, there are no statesmen."

"Come, doctor, why do you say that?" asked his interlocutor.

"Look forward five hundred, a thousand years, Marquis, and what do you see?" answered Yen How. "Is it not this?—the white man and the yellow man in their death-grip, contending for the earth. The white and the yellow—there are no others. The black is the slave of both; the brown does not count. But there are those two; and when the day comes that they stand face to face in dreadful hate, saying, 'one or other must quit this earth,' shall I tell you which side will win?"

"Which do you think?"

"The white will win, Marquis."

"There I differ from you," said the Marquis Ito.

"Ah! you differ from me. But I am right all the same; and I mean, sooner or later, to prove it to you abundantly, abundantly! The white will win, I tell you! You great men in Japan are trying to copy them, to vie with them straining your poor necks to come up with them; but I have passed my life in studying them—and I've got something to tell you: listen to it: you cannot, Marquis, you cannot, you cannot!"

"Our Navy already——" began the Marquis.

"Pish! your Navy! Who built it for you? It was they. Your Navy is like a razor in the hands of an ape which has seen its master use it. The brute may or may not cut its own throat with it. And as soon as they build a navy for you, they will build one twice as big for themselves, and twice as good. There is no reason why you should not follow them, and go on following them—only understand that *you cannot catch them!* And this is another thing that you should understand—that the longer you follow them, the farther they get away from you. Their *rate* of progress is continually increasing. Every day that passes over the world gives them an additional advantage over you. To-day their guns can mow you down by hundreds; in a hundred years they will mow you down by thousands; in five hundred years by millions. Can't you see?—You are losing time!"

"Time? What do you mean?"

"Ah, I mean that there are no longer any statesmen, Marquis. The eye of the statesman ranges far, far into the tracts of the future, doesn't it? But we! Here are we now—we Japanese, we Chinese, we yellow men—playing about in little diplomatic mud-puddles with French, and Russian, and English, and German, as if all that mattered two *sen!* And all the time we keep sitting down idly, blind to the fact that French, and English, and the rest are equally our foe, and tyrant, and vulture, one not more than the other! That if we do not eat them all now, at once, they all will swallow us whole some day. And to see China fighting with Japan in such a case, and Japan banging into China—is it not childish enough to make a donkey, or even a Grand Lama, laugh? There are no statesmen any longer, Marquis."

"Well, come, I see something in what you are driving

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at," said Ito. "We and China fighting were like two birds pecking at each other on a bough, when suddenly they are both down the belly of a serpent, which has been

Yen How rose slowly to his feet.

calmly watching them. Well, but what are we to do? By your own showing, the birds can do nothing against the serpent."

"Did I say that?" asked Yen, lifting his eyebrows in a sly, innocent surprise. "Oh, I didn't mean it! There are many birds, you see, and few serpents. In the world to-day there are 408,000,000 Christians and—mark the figures!—1,004,000,000 non-Christians. I can see that you are startled."

"You think that by sheer force of numbers——"

"Yes, if we had taken our opportunity in time—if we had struck two hundred—a hundred years ago. Even to-day I believe that it is hardly too late, if the yellow race can find a great leader. I am perfectly sure that in a hundred years' time it *will* be too late."

"Why so?"

"I have told you. By that time the white man will have something like a magician's power over all nature. He will say to the mountains and the seas: 'Be removed!'—and at his mere whisper they will obey him. We yellow men, too, will have advanced, but they will have vastly outstripped us. We *cannot* follow them, I tell you. The day will come when our mere numbers will no longer be of any importance in baulking and overthrowing them."

"You talk of big things, my friend," said Ito. "Are you serious?"

"Yes, Marquis, I am serious."

"You advocate a League of the Yellow Races?"

"I do."

"Ha! ha! the idea tickles me; it is so very far from realisation—there are so many obstacles——"

"No, really—I think not. I believe it is very near to realisation. Events are at this moment in progress at Pekin which will *force* it to accomplishment—soon. Suppose I tell you that I, personally, have laid those events in train?"

"You, doctor? What, are you going to lead us all, then, against Paris and London? Ha! Ha!"

"Perhaps, Marquis."

"What, to face the Nordenfeldts, and the Maxims, and the Krupps? The Chinese will run from the first twelve-pounder!"

"*There may not be any twelve-pounders there when they get to Paris and London*," said Yen How, with absolute coolness, yet with an emphasis and an intonation of solemnity in his voice which held the Marquis from answering for quite a minute.

"Really, I don't understand you," he said at last.

"Yet my meaning should be clear."

"No—do explain yourself."

Yen How rose slowly to his feet before he answered.

"Marquis," he said, "is it possible you do not see that China has it in her power to turn Europe into an exhausted waste within, say, three months from to-night, without firing a single shot or spending a single *tael*?"

(*To be continued.*)

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"Good-morning! It's very wet to-day."

"Yes, it generally is when one wants it to be fine."

"You have further to go than usual?" questioningly.

"Certainly—as it's wet."

"I'm sorry, but perhaps it will be fine presently," and raising his hat, as his companion marched off, the speaker turned in the opposite direction.

They resided in a building of flats—he in Flat G and she in F.

They always met at the entrance in the morning, when starting off for their day's work, and the preceding conversation on the weather usually took place, the tenor of it merely varying according to the kind of day it happened to be.

He was an "old young man," with the worn, grey face common to those who work hard, live alone, and view life's pleasures from afar off.

She was an "old young woman" whom hard experiences had embittered and hard work aged.

She was in the Civil Service, and went off to an office every morning, returning at five o'clock each evening. An old woman waited on her occasionally, but she lived quite alone. Sometimes she had a friend to see her, but not often, and she always looked tired.

The inhabitant of Flat G lived alone, and was always tired also, so he was able to feel for her.

He would like to have been friends with her, but she was very short in her manner and resolutely repulsed any overture on his part.

She had had an unfortunate experience with men and distrusted the whole sex. The idea of friendship between a man and woman was to her an absurd idea, if not an impossibility. She laughed scornfully when a friend alluded to such a compact and deplored the depravity of the present age, particularly the freedom of intercourse between the sexes.

Her neighbour guessed her feelings on the subject, and refrained from noticing her as much as he would like to have done.

Not that he admired her in any way, but there were times when he thought a woman's voice might have cheered him. Besides, they were both lonely and had to work hard and find for themselves, so that even though she was so brusque, they would have had enough in common to feed a passing friendship. He had neither mother, sister, nor relative to care what became of him, and he was too poor and proud to make friends, so he had to content himself by just saying "Good-morning" to this strong-minded lady-clerk and discussing the weather.

He thought about her that night after he had taken off his wet things, lighted his fire, and set his own frugal supper. He supposed she was sitting in the room across the landing, feeling just as tired and lonely as he.

It seemed a pity they could not have brightened an hour for each other. He was in that mood when any living creature's presence would have been better than the stillness and loneliness.

It was a mood he often experienced in the evenings, and somehow he did not get used to it.

As it happened, on that particular evening there was company in Flat F. Miss White had one of her fellow-clerks spending an hour or two with her, and the two were chatting over their supper.

"Nell Thurnall is going to be married next Thursday," remarked Miss Poole, the visitor.

"Poor thing," replied her companion; "only a few days more and she will have given up her freedom."

"Nonsense, Annie, you talk like a sour old maid."

"Naturally, since I am one."

"It is your own fault if you are, I expect. Why do you persist in scoffing at love and marriage? Nell

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Thurnall will be much happier than drudging at the office every day."

"Possibly, but it's open to doubt. I don't blame her, I only pity her. She'll find out what men are now, and then it's just a chance if she won't wish for the old office days again."

"Men are not all bad."

"Aren't they? Well, I suppose there may be a few exceptions. Anyhow, they're all selfish."

Miss Poole knit her brows thoughtfully, but changed the subject; she had learnt to know that her friend was incorrigible in this one.

"Do you know your neighbour?" she asked. "He walked upstairs just before me this evening."

"I know him by sight. He always takes upon himself to say 'good-morning' to me, but what on earth for I don't know."

"There's no harm in his wishing you 'good-morning.'"

"No; only my replies are not as a rule appreciative."

"Don't you think it would be nice if you knew him? Perhaps he's dull sometimes, as well as you. I thought he had such a sad, careworn face. Does he live alone?"

"Yes, but he could invite a friend in if he wanted to."

"Does he ever?"

"I don't think so; I've never heard anyone come or go."

"Poor fellow! If I were in your place I should want to be kind to him."

"A lot of thanks you'd get for your trouble!"

"I don't know that I should want any. It might be sufficient to have brightened his life a little. I'm not specially religious, but I do believe in helping to bear one another's burdens when we can. You might have a Platonic friendship."

"Nonsense, the thing is an impossibility; the race is not educated up to it."

"And can't we even have sympathy between men and women?"

"There's too much of it. I've no doubt the good gentleman of Flat G has plenty of friends out, if not in."

"He has a nice face," continued her companion, unheeding her. "I couldn't help feeling sorry for him; he looked so worn and tired."

A month later, Miss Poole again visited the occupant of Flat F.

"Well, are you friends yet?" she asked, in the course of the evening.

"Friends with whom?"

"The gentleman across the landing."

"Indeed, no; what an absurd idea!"

"I hoped you would change your mind after our talk."

"Never likely; besides, I don't suppose he wishes it."

"On the contrary, I think he would be glad. When I went home the last time I was here, I met him again on the stairs, and he looked so miserable. I can't tell you how sorry I felt, he looked so hopeless. Why not try a little friendliness, it could not hurt and you could so easily tell if he preferred to be left alone."

"My dear girl, I'm not a child, and I know men. If he wants a friend he needn't look to me for one. It takes me all my time to keep myself going," and with a determined air she changed the subject.

Upstairs in Flat G the tenant crouched over his fire. He had been shivering all day and his head ached. He felt as if something hot would have set him right, but he had not sufficient energy to get it.

Besides, he felt that he shouldn't mind if he did fall ill and die. No one would miss him and there were many ready to step into his post. It would be hard to die alone, but it couldn't be helped, and perhaps it wouldn't really be any worse than living alone.

The next morning, when he opened his lips to give his usual salutation to his neighbour a violent fit of coughing came on.

She stopped a moment and a faint suspicion of compassion came over her face.

"You have taken cold," she said brusquely.

"Yes," he replied. "I'm afraid I have."

"You don't take care of yourself."

"Why should I? It isn't worth while," he answered, drearily.

His answer rather annoyed her, so she remarked coldly, "Perhaps not," and walked away.

When she had gone a few steps she repented her coldness, and wished she had been a little more sympathetic, for he really looked very ill.

"Still, it's no use now," she argued, "and, after all, it might be a little awkward when he was all right again."

But his face haunted her during the day in spite of her efforts to forget it, and his listless, hopeless eyes seemed to follow her about, asking for a few crumbs of sympathy. Then she grew angry with herself, and argued, "He should get a friend if he wants one. I have shown him that I don't intend to unbend," and she applied herself more assiduously to her office-work.

The next morning she walked downstairs with a set, determined face, but for the first time the tenant of Flat G did not go to his day's work, so her intended hauteur was not called into action.

The following day he was again absent, and her hardness evaporated a little.

During the day she relaxed still more, and decided to speak to him kindly the next morning. But he was absent again, and so she said, "If he does not come to-morrow, I will ask the caretaker about him."

The following day she ate her hurried breakfast with an anxious feeling, in spite of her determined efforts to persuade herself that she was unconcerned.

When she found him again absent, however, the anxious feelings conquered.

She turned aside and knocked at the caretaker's door.

"Is Mr. Hedley ill?" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

"Do you think there is anything he wants?"

"He never asks for anything."

"Has he had a doctor?"

"No, he won't. He gave me strict orders not to send for one."

Miss White glanced at the clock and saw she had not a moment to spare. She hastily slipped her hand in her pocket and drew out a two-shilling piece, which had somehow got loose there, and giving it to the woman, said, in her usual brusque manner, "See that he is well looked after," and vanished.

She set her lips hard as she hurried to the station, and her face was almost forbidding as she elbowed her way down the crowded platform into a third-class carriage.

At the office she was even shorter in speech than usual, and her fellow clerks looked at her and shrugged their shoulders. They thought it was a pity Annie White so completely spoilt herself by her disagreeable temper.

In the evening, she knocked again at the caretaker's door; but she was out, and her husband said she would not be back again for half-an-hour.

So she went upstairs and sat down to her solitary

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meal as usual. Her mouth was still hard set, but every now and then she found herself gazing vacantly into the fire, and her food went almost untasted.

After the third fit of vacancy she shook herself angrily and muttered. "What is it to me? If I were ill no one would bother. It's no use making a fuss. Life's desperately hard for some people and child's play for others. It doesn't seem fair; but that's the long and short of it, and worrying does not mend matters. It's no use making a fuss."

Half-an-hour later she was disturbed by a knock, and, in answer to her summons, the caretaker entered.

"I came to tell you, miss, as Mr. Hedley was asking about you this afternoon. He wondered if you'd be late. I think he'd like to see you. He seems very bad."

"Did he ask to see me?"

"No, but he seemed pleased when I told him you had asked after him, and wondered if you would be late."

"Has he all he wants?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, perhaps I'll go in presently," and she turned away rather curtly.

When the door closed she sat down and stared hard at the fire, and knit her forehead.

All day long she had experienced an impulse to go and see him, and all day long she had fought against it. She argued that when he was well again she could not easily return to the old conditions, and she was still resolutely opposed to the idea of commencing a friendship.

And all the time she knew that she had missed him; had missed his salutation, missed his familiar figure, and was longing to speak that unsaid word of kindness, which was waiting for him.

But she would not approach him first. It was against the principles of her life. He should take the initiative, and send for her if he wanted her. And she sat there hoping and hoping that he would call her to his bedside that she might smooth his pillow and care for him tenderly.

And he, the sufferer, lay in his little bachelor room, yearning for a word from the lips of the woman who had so studiously avoided him, yearning for the touch of her soft cool hand on his burning forehead. But he would not ask her to come. He feared that her susceptibilities would be shocked, and that her opinion of him would become poorer than even now he was afraid it was.

If only she gave him one thought! If only she missed him, even ever so little! But no; he knew she would never trouble her head about him, and a slight flush suffused his cheek as the pain of it gripped his heart.

Then he gasped, and lay perfectly still.

* * * * *

The next evening a white-faced woman crossed the landing, and in her hands were white flowers.

She stepped softly into the chamber of death, and, with set lips, stood beside the still, dead form.

And the little tired smile was still on the dead man's face, for it had not faded at all, and so he went out of the world, longing for that woman's touch which might have soothed the anguish and loneliness of his soul.

Annie White saw it all, and as she laid her flowers in his thin, wasted hands, her lips relaxed and hot tears coursed down her cheeks and fell like bright dew-drops on the delicate blossoms.

When she moved away at last, her head was bent and her steps dragged wearily.

In the outer room she glanced round quickly.

Then, with hands that would tremble in spite of her iron will, she took up an old pipe and a worn tobacco pouch.

"No one will miss these," she thought, and stole back to her solitary fireside.

Gertrude Page.

A GREAT SCHEME.

HOW TO GET ANY BOOK YOU WANT.

WE are constantly receiving complaints from readers that we do not devise competitions in which everybody can enter.

It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

Every week we shall give away half-a-dozen books.

All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

All applications to be addressed to "BOOKS," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please let me have: **S. S.**

Book .....

Price .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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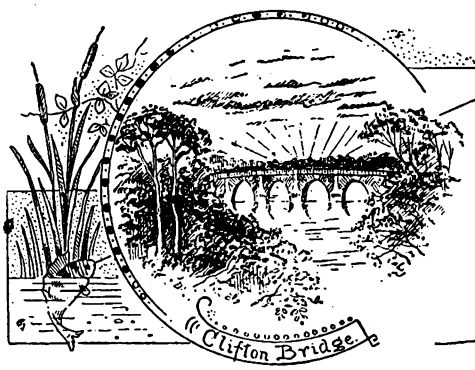

A CURIOUS COMBINATION.

"Yes, I think you have a very interesting collection of curious things picked up abroad," I said as I sat down in the cosy armchair in my uncle's study and smoking-room. "But there is one curio which surprises me, I confess."

"Which was it?" asked my relation, passing the box of cigarettes—he never smoked a cigar. "Why did you not mention it as we passed, as you did several others?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I scarcely liked to do so," I returned. "I have always understood that you were dead against betting—at least, since you settled down in this country; for I did not know you personally before that time. As I was saying," I continued, "you were so much against betting that it did strike me as rather odd that you should have among your curiosities a piece of wedding cake and a racing card under a glass case! And it is a strange combination, too."

My uncle smiled, then his face became grave.

"There is a story attached to that curio," he said, "and that is what turned me against betting. The incident occurred soon after I returned to England. I saved a man's life—somewhat by accident. As we have another hour to while away, I'll tell you about it, if you like. It may point a moral instructive to you," he concluded with a sly glance.

"I should much like to hear it," I replied promptly.

My uncle placed his cigarette on the ash tray, brushed his moustache with his handkerchief, and narrated the following story:

"One of the first persons I met on my return to England—that is, of those known to me, of course—was Sir Ralph Waters, whose acquaintance I had made while he was hunting big game in South Africa. He had no title when I saw him out there, but his father had died in the meantime and he had succeeded to the baronetcy.

"He was pleased to see me and insisted upon my going here, there, and everywhere with him. He was a devotee of horseracing and—to come to the point—I agreed to accompany him to see the City and Suburban. I believe that is the first important race of the year, but perhaps I am wrong. I don't take much interest in the sport.

"Sir Ralph was rather in advance of his appointed time in calling for me on the morning of the race, but as I was ready we started for the station, and consequently had several minutes to wait for our train. While strolling about the platform, Sir Ralph nodded to a good many persons and spoke to some.

"'Hallo, Grainger!' he exclaimed suddenly, as a young man came up to him. 'Are *you* going down to-day?'

"'Going down,' echoed the new-comer. 'I should think so!' He seemed very much agitated; he continually felt his necktie to see if it were quite as it should be, twirled his slight moustache, and did many other things that people generally do when they are in a nervous state.

"'Well, of course,' said Waters apologetically, 'there's no—— But I am forgetting my manners. Allow me to introduce you to my friend, Mr. Harvey.'

"The usual exchange of compliments passed between us; then Waters resumed the thread of his remarks.

"'I thought you were—h'm—otherwise engaged, you know, and too busy to run down to-day. But perhaps she is coming down herself with her father?'

"'N—o—o,' answered the young fellow, nervously toying with his watch-chain.

"'Nothing wrong, I hope?' queried the Baronet. 'You appear to be rather agitated.'

"'N—o, nothing amiss in that direction,' was Grainger's reply. Then, as though he wished to confide in somebody, he continued: 'Got rather a lot on—er—I——'

"'Ah! Been backing the favourite heavily, eh? Feel a bit shaky about it? Got much on it—how much?'

"'More than I can raise, if I lose,' said Grainger, staring absently in front of him.

"'H'm, that's bad,' remarked Waters thoughtfully. 'Whatever made you go it so strong on that horse? You know it's a bit risky under the circumstances, don't you? Suppose the owner were to die before the race—the horse would be scratched and your money gone.'

"'Heavens!' groaned Grainger. 'Don't talk about that! It's like this,' he went on, 'I am to marry her in a fortnight, and I am supposed to have a certain sum put snugly by. But I haven't got it! I have lost a heap lately at cards and so on, and I am in a hole. So I made up my mind to have a big try to recoup over this race. If it wins, I'm all right.'

"'And if it doesn't?' asked Sir Ralph.

"There was just a second's pause; then Grainger, his face a shade paler, opened his coat a little wider and passed his fingers significantly over his waistcoat pocket.

"'Nonsense!' exclaimed Waters with a light laugh.

"Then we had to hurry to take our seats and we lost sight of Grainger.

"'Do you think he will do anything desperate?' I inquired of my friend when we were seated and the train was running along. I felt a trifle nervous about the young fellow. But Waters laughed.

"'My dear Harvey,' he expostulated, 'I have no doubt that the horse will win. The only uncertainty is the life of the owner; if he dies before the race is run—or if

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a telegram is received after the race, to say that he died before the race—I believe the horse is disqualified, and Grainger would lose the bets. I believe that's how it is, and, as he takes it in the same way, I suppose it's correct. But it would be the very perversity of fate if such a thing were to happen! Moreover, if it came to the worst, Grainger wouldn't do anything rash. They all feel like that. He would get over it; his people—or hers—would put things straight.'

"I said nothing, but my friend's lightly spoken words only partly reassured me.

"You do not need that I should describe the races or the other happenings. I waited anxiously for the great event, inwardly praying that nothing would arise, and that Fliegend would win—for Grainger's sake. Strange that I should take such interest in a man who was really unknown to me.

"At last the appointed time arrived. The horses started and went over the ground in splendid style. Fliegend was behind at first, but he pulled up steadily and won easily. I was glad. Others grumbled because there had been 'no race'; Fliegend had had it all his own way, they declared.

"Sir Ralph laughed at the heartfelt manner in which I said I was glad, and left me for a few minutes to talk to some friends. I was watching the scene with some curiosity and forgot him until he grasped me by the shoulder.

"'What's the matter?' I asked, on noticing his agitated face.

"'Just received a wire to say that the owner of Fliegend died fifteen minutes before the race!' he replied; 'and I hear that the news has just reached Grainger and he went off with a fearful oath! I'm afraid he will do himself some harm. Of course he thought he was saved, and the revulsion of feeling is enough to make him desperate. Had it been after the race, I shouldn't have thought so much about it, but now——! Come on!'

"We had been making our way out of the crowd while he was speaking; we now hurried along.

"'Why did the news not reach us sooner?' I asked.

"'He's away, you know,' said Waters, forgetting that I knew nothing.

"'Where are you going?' was my next inquiry.

"'To try to overtake young Grainger. I feel a bit scared about him now. I was told he went in this direction.'

"'But surely they will not disqualify the horse now?'

"'They will. I don't quite understand how it goes with the betting, whether the horse's backers lose or the bets are off; but in any case Grainger means mischief, I fear.'

"We hurried along, making an inquiry whenever we could, but could not find a clue to the young man's whereabouts. We were beginning to despair, when we met a man who, in answer to our inquiry and description, told us that he had seen such a man turn into a quiet lane quite close.

"'He means it, by George!' muttered Waters, just loud enough for me to hear. And he dashed off at top speed, I following at his heels.

"The lane was a winding one; one of those along which you can never see for a much greater distance than half a dozen yards. We ran quickly and quietly along the road. Suddenly, as we turned a bend, the Baronet uttered an exclamation and shot forward with a fierce spurt.

"I could see it all. Grainger stood against the hedge holding a pistol to his temple. Waters leapt forward. There was a report and—although I am accustomed to scenes of bloodshed and the sound of firearms—I shut my eyes.

"'Why did you stop me?' I heard a voice cry, half in sorrow and half in anger.

"Then I knew that Waters had been in time. I opened my eyes and went towards them.

"'Because I don't wish to see you make an ass of yourself,' was Sir Ralph's answer to Grainger's interrogation. 'You will pull through it. Don't be a fool.'

"'I shan't,' cried the young fellow moodily. 'There is no getting out of it, and if you had let me alone I should have been at peace now. I shall do it as soon as you are gone.'

"'Then we won't leave you,' said my friend decidedly.

"'All right,' said Grainger sulkily. 'Take me home, since you constitute yourselves my guardians.'

"'That's the way,' said Waters cheerily. But I was not deceived so easily, and kept my eye on the wretched man.

"It was lucky I did. Just as we reached the end of the lane, I saw him take out a tiny knife and raise his hand. I jumped to his side and grasped his hand just as he was about to plunge the point into a vein.

"We three had a fierce struggle for a moment. We prevented him from accomplishing his purpose, but he would not lose his grip of the knife, and I had to hold the hand while Waters seized the other. We were standing in that attitude, wondering what on earth we should do with him, when an idea flashed across my brain.

"'Where did the owner die?' I asked. The question seemed irrelevant, but I remembered the answer of Waters when I inquired why the news had not arrived sooner.

"'In Madrid.'

"'Madrid?' I echoed in a confused manner. 'But the time is different there! Perhaps the race is legal after all. There's about half-an-hour's difference.'

"Grainger stared at me, then at Waters, and the latter returned the stare.

"'I believe you've hit it,' said Sir Ralph slowly. 'What idiots we were not to think of that before! That means that he died some minutes after the race!'

"Grainger looked from one to the other, scarcely daring to believe that it could be true.

"'Perhaps the telegram stated English time?' he ventured.

"'Not at all!' exclaimed Sir Ralph promptly. 'Grainger, my boy, you are safe! Come away at once. We will arrange it in London.'

"Grainger was more hopeful after that, and we returned to London to find that our ideas were correct, and that the authorities—stewards do you call them?—had decided the matter as we expected.

"When Grainger's marriage took place, I was invited. He took the opportunity to tell me that he had vowed never to bet again; and he also said that he owed his life to me. I brought away with me a piece of the wedding cake and placed it with the racing card in my collection.

"Of course," concluded my uncle, "this is between ourselves! I should not like the story to get to the ears of Grainger's wife or his people. And I have never explained that curio to anyone else."

"You ought to have changed the names before telling me," I remarked with a smile.

"I did," he answered dryly. G. E. Lingen.

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THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

The narrow brown path wound up between the dark green laurels to the door of a cabin that was perched like a bird with wide-spread wings on a shelf of the mountain.

In some places that path was covered with brown, polished pine straw, and overhead the blue sky twinkled between the interlaced needles of the sturdy mountain pines.

At the cabin the path widened out, forming a little unfenced yard where dahlias and sunflowers and mountain lilies grew, and then went out into the blue distance far above.

From the little flower-bordered yard there was a view of a town five miles distant in the valley, and a glimmering river.

Two men sat on wooden benches under the chestnut trees in front of the cabin. One was a young man with a Hercules form and an Apollo face. He was looking now at a train of cars that was crawling like a huge worm through the valley toward the town.

A look of discontent clouded the blue of his eyes, and a frown rested on his brow.

"I wish I'der gone with you, that first summer," he said, in the soft, musical drawl that belongs to the southern mountaineer. "I warn't twenty then, an' I mighter been rich by this time."

The elder man gazed. He was sunburnt and grizzled and keen-eyed. He had just come up to the mountains after a long stay out West.

"I don't know that you'd have made anything worth while, if you'd gone then, seeing that you might have lost what by staying here you have won." His grey eyes turned to the open door as he finished. The keen brightness left them, and they grew dark and tender. The whole face softened.

Inside, a woman sat on a low chair with a baby in her arms. Down in Mexico, Jack Hawley, the young English engineer, had seen a picture of a Madonna with a face like the one before him. Such a satisfied, beautiful face, with its great brown eyes, waving dusky hair, and gentle smiling lips. For Jeane was happy—simply happy. She knew nothing of the world beyond her quiet mountains—nothing of the pressing forward, the ceaseless struggle that went on there. It had reached Dick, but not the happy heart of his wife. Jeane lived in her own Arcadia, her own Eden!

"It seems to me, Dick, that you've a sort of Heaven up here. I shouldn't want any other if this were mine. And as for money, what could it buy you, man, if in all the world you wanted only this?"

There was a curious ring in the man's low voice.

Dick dragged his eyes slowly from the train of cars that had come to be a slender, moving shadow beside a silver ribbon. An amused smile curved the beautiful lips beneath the dark moustache.

"Shucks, Jack Hawley. I recollect that old foolishness er yourn. Ain't you over it yet? Well, I wisht I'der let yer had her. I wisht I'der swapped chances with you, then I'der had the boodle. I'd ruther have that than——"

"Dick!" Jack's eyes flashed.

"It's so, Jack Hawley. There's no use beatin' about the bush! Hearin' er your luck's brought hit out whar I can't cram hit back. What kin a man do hampered with a wife an' chap?"

"What in the world should he want to do but live and love them?"

Jack Hawley looked at the splendid face before him, and his eyes flashed fire and his tall form quivered. Inside the Madonna face above the sleeping baby slowly whitened and the brown eyes turned black.

"That'll do fur sweetheart talk," Dick said with a bitter laugh. "It don't sound the same when you're tied hard an' fast. If I's foot loose I could make my way with other men. If I's free with a thousand pounds, I could be *somebody*."

"You could be—you are a fool or a devil," Jack Hawley exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Would you rather have a thousand pounds than *that*?" He stretched out his long arm towards the cabin door.

"Well, then, though I don't see as you've got a durn to do with it, I would." Dick could not see inside the cabin. As he finished speaking he rose lazily, glanced up at the sky, and went down the brown path, leaving his visitor alone under the chestnut trees.

Shading his eyes with his great hairy hand Jack Hawley watched him, as with long, graceful strides the man went down.

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Jack's heart was bursting. How lightly this man held what he would have died to win!

He turned to the cabin when Dick's form was no longer in sight.

In the doorway stood Jeane, still and white, her brown eyes shining.

"Jeane!"

"I understood, Jack. It's goin' ter kill me, I reckon."

"No, it shall not. He's a brute, Jeane. He hasn't the heart of a dog."

"It ain't that, Jack. It's that something's kept him back from successin'. It don't hurt any worse than the something's *us*." She held the baby closer to her breast.

"You love him, Jeane?"

"Yes," she said simply. Her eyes told how well.

"Has he seemed—" The man hesitated, a flush showing through the brown of his face. He brushed back his grey-streaked hair and went on:

"There's no one else—you are so alone, Jeane, since the old gran'ther died. And he said it to *me*—Dick did. To *me*, and he knew it's been with me all these years—such weary years, Jeane. He let *me* know and you heard; so there's no one else to help you, Jeane—no one but me." His face glowed, his voice rang out triumphantly. "So tell me, has he been careless—or—or——" He took out his great red handkerchief and wiped his lips.

"I don't know, Jack. How should I? I warn't looking for that. I love him."

"Woman, what manner of love is this?"

He was inside the cabin now, standing before her with the little sleeping baby between them.

"Is it strange? It seems mighty nachal ter me," she said.

"And you missed nothing?"

"In Dick? Oh, no! You ain't a woman, Jack, an' so you don't understand. Poor Dick! How han'some he is! He could be a great man where you've been, Jack."

"He's a fool—he's a coward.—"

"No, he ain't. He's just disappointed—he made a mistake. I wisht he'der let you have me, Jack."

"Heaven knows I do. A thousand dollars! Would you rather he had them, Jeane?"

"Yes, *he'd* rather."

"Maybe he didn't mean it."

"He meant it! I felt that. I see now; it's such a pity. I wisht he 'der gone with you. He mighter had a thousand dollars by now."

Jack Hawley's eyes burnt like flame. He dropped the lids over them. A dark, slow flush reddened his cheeks above the grizzled beard.

"He can have it, Jeane. Come away with me, you and—and the little kid, and I'll give him twice—five times a thousand dollars and he will be free. The world can have him."

She caught her breath and looked up at him. His eyes were on the floor.

"Will you do that, Jack? I'm not worth it, but will you? Five thousand dollars! Dick can surely be happy with that. Will you?"

"Yes. I've got it, every cent down in town. I'd double it. I'd give every cent, my last penny, and work for you and—and the little kid, only to be near you, Jeane."

"And he will be rich and free—Dick will," she said, a radiant smile on her white face.

"And you, Jeane?"

"Me? Oh, I shall know that Dick is happy! I can't see any further than that."

The man's face was full of love, burning, intense love as he looked at her, but another face was between, just as it had always been, and she did not see.

"I'll send the money, Jeane. Leave it here where—where he can find it, and come down to the station in time for the six o'clock train. I will meet you somewhere on the path."

"I'll come."

He went quickly away. An old woman hobbled past him and went into the cabin.

She sat down before the smouldering fire, and Jeane laid the child in her arms and began slowly to collect in a little bundle some pieces of coarse clothing.

"Air ye fixin' ter go off? Hit's gwinter rain 'fo' night. I look fur hit to po' cats an' dogs," the old woman said, shivering.

"I got to go, mother. It's fur Dick."

"Fur Dick? He's my own boy, but you're a fool to humour an' do fur 'im an' he keerin' no more'n he does."

Jeane caught her breath sharply. Even the dim eyes of Dick's fond old mother had seen.

Low, rumbling thunder sounded among the mountains. The western sky was dark, the falling of the water not far away sounded sharp and clear. Birds called shrilly to each other.

A boy came to the cabin door with an envelope. Jeane took it and laid it on the table. There was no writing on the outside. She brought a rusty pen and a small bottle of ink and slowly wrote a line across the brown surface. As she wrote a deep crimson dyed her brown, but it faded when she laid the pen aside, and her face was pale again. The characters she had traced on the envelope were cramped and unbeautiful, for Jeane's hand was not used to such work, but it was steady as she wrote the words. A sob rose to her white lips as she turned away, but that was all.

She put on her calico sunbonnet and drew a shawl over her shoulders. Taking up her bundle she slipped it on her arm, and then took the baby from the nodding old woman.

One glance at the envelope on the table, a long shudder and she was gone.

It mattered so little about the storm. The wind was rising. It screamed and sobbed like a lost soul as it twisted the trees and rushed through the rocky gorges. She held her baby close, and clung to the steep brown path. She was sure-footed. It was almost cold on the mountain.

The tall trees twisted and bowed under the blackened sky, a hundred echoes repeated the crash and roar of the thunder. Awful flashes of lightning cut their terrible way across the hurrying clouds, and then a sheet of blinding rain almost swept the struggling woman from her feet. But she went on.

Once through all the crash and roar she heard a voice calling her name. But it seemed to her that it must be only fancy. Who would be calling her back?

She turned when the sound reached her again and looked back. Through the falling rain she saw a face—Dick's face. He was calling her. Of course he did not know that she was getting out of his way. He must have missed seeing the envelope.

She stumbled on. She could not wait to explain now.

Farther down the path she saw Jack Hawley leaping up the mountain side towards her. His tall form was

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bent, and he was coming facing the terrible storm. The path was straight here and she could see both men.

And then the very mountain seemed to be on fire. There was a flash and a crash; the earth trembled. The two men started back, the eyes of each found the other's white face, and between them on the rain-drenched path, her baby on her breast, lay Jeane, her Madonna face turned up to the sky.

Suddenly the rain ceased and the wind was still. There was a great calm. Nature held her breath in pity—in horror.

The two men stood for an instant looking into each other's eyes, then Dick stooped and lifted the little dead baby in his arms.

With a deep sob Jack Hawley raised Jeane's body and held it close to his breast.

Dick turned towards the cabin and Jack followed slowly.

With a soft gurgling sound the fallen rain swept down the mountain side, across the broken flowers in the little unfenced yard under the chestnut trees in front of the cabin door.

The two men went in and silently laid their burdens on the bed.

The old woman sleeping and nodding before the fire did not hear.

Dick pointed to an envelope that lay upon the table. The end was torn across.

Jack Hawley bent down and read the words:

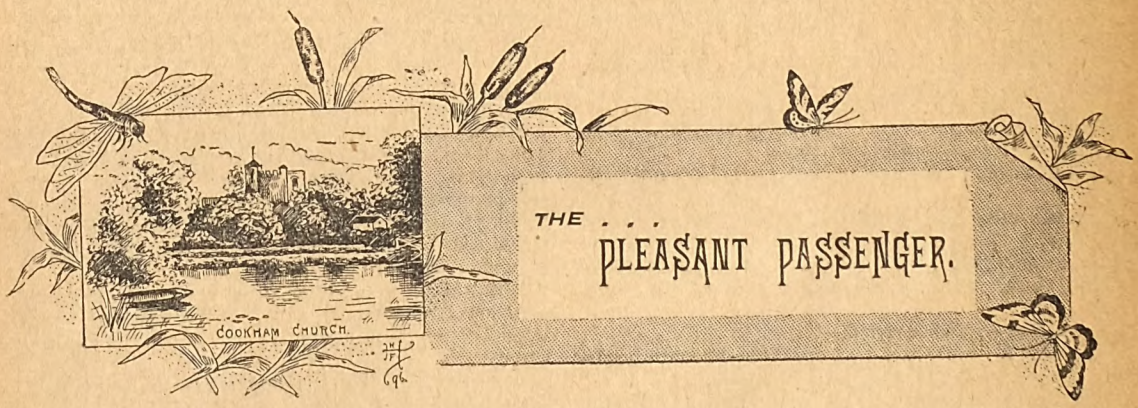
"This is what you wanted, Dick. It is the price of a soul."

"I told you they warn't worth having. That's a woman for you. She was runnin' away with you," Dick said calmly.

A strange smile flittered across Jack Hawley's face He went to the bed and reverently kissed the marble face of his Madonna.

"Yes," he said, turning to Dick. "But a man like you could never understand. I shall not explain. Jeane is safe. You have your wish, Dick; good-love—I hope it is forever," and he bowed his head and went out from the cabin and down the brown mountain path, for beyond lay the world where men forget!

Ellen Wycoff.



"I am afraid the return voyage will seem rather dull to you, captain, after the pleasant time we are all having on the voyage out. Speaking for myself, I can safely say that I have never met such an entertaining companion as our fellow passenger Mr. Merino."

"Yes," I replied, "he has made the trip a very pleasant one, and no doubt the return journey will be a bit dull."

This little talk took place on the deck of the *Bodmin Castle* about three weeks after she had sailed from the Mersey for Melbourne. I thoroughly endorsed all that the speaker had said concerning the personal charms—that is by no means too strong a term to use—of the young Spaniard who is one of my passengers. He was really the most agreeable man I ever met, either on sea or land.

He was a young man about twenty-five, and was making this voyage for the benefit of his health; as he himself had told us, his stay in England—for the purpose of acquiring our language and a knowledge of our business methods—had developed the seeds of consumption which he inherited, and he had been advised to take a long sea trip as the best means of fighting the dread malady.

Everyone on board felt sorry for him, and this sympathy served to make more attractive the charm of his witty conversation. Even the pretty foreign accent and the occasional slips made us like him all the more. I believe that most of the passengers wondered however they would have passed the time had he not been making the trip with us.

The *Bodmin Castle* did not convey many passengers at any time, and on this voyage there were nine. The ship usually carried a large cargo of a mixed nature.

My nine passengers consisted of the following persons: First on the list I place the young Spanish señor; then there was an elderly gentleman, Mr Langton, a merchant in a large way of business (it was he who had made the remark with which the story opened); a brother and sister, aged between thirty-five and forty, who were going out for the purpose of taking up some property; a Mr. Ruston and his wife, middle-aged people; and two other gentlemen who need not be specially mentioned.

All were simply charmed by the Spaniard's amiability

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and polished manner. In spite of his own delicate health—he always wore a thick scarf—he was a good sailor and not in the least affected by the motion of the vessel, whereas the others were all ill. When they were able to return on deck, he was most attentive to them, helping them here and assisting them there, and winning his way into their good books until—by the time we had made three weeks sail—I really believe they would have told him all their private business without scruple had he asked them to do so.

Mr. Langton was about to make some further remark to me when he espied the pleasant passenger.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "There is Señor Merino. He looks a little better. I will see how he feels."

And he went off to speak to him and left me to my duties. I saw Merino seat himself on a stool by the side of an empty cask and set to work diligently at a model of the *Bodmin Castle* which he was making for me, and then I had to turn my attention to something else, and for the time I forgot him.

All went well until we were within a week's sail of Melbourne. One morning, Merino came towards me on the deck, and I noticed that his face wore a worried expression. This was so contrary to custom that I was struck by it.

"Don't you feel well this morning, sir?" I asked. I never called him "señor," as the others did—I'm not much of a hand at those foreign words.

"The fact is, captain," he said hesitatingly, nervously twisting one end of his moustache, "I am a leetle worried."

He looked towards the empty cask, which he had been using as a table while making the model.

"Ah!" I said, noticing the direction of the look. "I know what you are worried about; you are afraid that you won't be able to finish that model of the *Bodmin Castle* that you wish to present to me. Now, it's very kind of you, sir, and I quite understand that a gentleman so good-natured as you are should feel vexed at not being able to keep a promise. But you have kept at that old tub too long for your health, and I shall refuse to allow you to work there any longer. I'll have it taken away."

"Oh, no, you must not do that, captain," he cried, looking quite upset. "Now, promise me you will not have that cask disturbed."

He seemed so bent upon it that I felt bound to assure him that the cask should not be touched on any account.

"But you are wrong, captain," he went on. "It is not that which worries me. I hardly like to mention it, but—but——."

He hesitated, and I waited for him to go on.

"The fact is"—he often made use of those words—"I have lost my gold watch—it has been taken out of my cabin."

I stared at him in surprise.

"Do you mean to say that it has been stolen?" I asked.

"I do," he replied emphatically. "There is no other explanation of its disappearance."

I was furious. The idea of anyone committing a theft was quite annoying enough, but that the victim should be the man who had done so much to make the voyage a pleasant one, who had been so kind and attentive to everybody on board—well, it made me about as angry as any one man could be.

"I'll have this inquired into," I cried. "If that watch is on this ship, it shall be found!"

"Wait a leetle, captain," said Merino rather more quietly. "I should like to find that watch because it was my father's, not so much on account of its value. But I think you will spoil the chances of getting it back if you lose your temper over the matter and order an investigation. I would not have said a word about it, but I think it should be known for the sake of the other passengers. Will you leave it to me and act as I may suggest?"

He spoke in such a winning manner that it was impossible to refuse him. So it was arranged that he should act as he thought best.

When the passengers were all seated at the table, he gently told them what had happened, with many apologies for disturbing their peace of mind.

"I think it only right to tell you," he observed in his most amiable manner, "so that you may take extra care of any valuable property which you may have brought with you. But," he added, "perhaps you have not brought anything very valuable?"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Langton, and all the other passengers looked very serious. "Why, I have a matter of three hundred pounds in cash and notes! What's to be done, captain?"

"I have asked him to leave the matter in my hands, and I think I may recover my property," rejoined Merino before I could speak. "It may be that no further attempt will be made on the goods of the passengers."

"It is to be hoped not," observed Mrs. Rushton nervously. "I wish I hadn't brought so much jewellery with me."

And as similar remarks were made by the other six, I began to get nettled.

"Such a thing has never occurred before while I've been captain," I exclaimed with some show of feeling. "I think I must ask you to release me from my promise, Mr. Merino, and let me work this affair through."

"No, captain," was his decided reply. "I will do it. Perhaps it will be best to begin at once. In the first place, we must search the chests of the seamen. I don't like to do this, but it is evident that the robber must be a seaman. But I understand the British sailor's character, and I know that the men will not like that. Therefore, we—the passengers—must submit to the same ordeal, just to satisfy the sailors. *We* have no reason for avoiding a search, is it not so?"

He looked round at them, and they all signified their willingness, and thought it very considerate of the young Spaniard.

Well, I passed the word round to the men and the officers that a search was to be made of their chests and belongings for Mr. Merino's watch, which had been stolen; and I took care to explain that the passengers' things were to be overhauled as well. The men took it more easily than I expected; they were sorry that Mr. Merino should have lost anything, because he had been so pleasant, and I suppose that quieted them. That is, all but the bo'sun, and he was as mad as a March hare.

However, all had to submit. My chief officer and one of the gentlemen passengers—a quiet man, who said very little—made the search together. But nothing was found, although we ransacked everything and looked everywhere.

"Well, I am sorry," said Merino with a sigh. "I was particularly attached to that watch because it was my father's; but it is—what do you say? Oh, yes, it's no good crying over spilt milk. No."

After that he seemed to forget his loss, and his cheer-

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ful manner returned. He went to work at the model, and remained sitting at the cask best part of the day.

He was really very clever at carpentering. I admired the way he carved the model of the *Bodmin Castle* and mentally promised myself that the model of the good ship should have the best place in my little home when I got back to Old England. Our ship's carpenter was loud in his praises of the Spaniard's cleverness with tools, and lent him anything he might want for the model or any of the other odd jobs that Merino was fond of doing.

We all turned in that night feeling a little more settled. Merino had quite recovered his spirits, and said he supposed that in some way he must have dropped the watch overboard, and he was glad for everybody's sake that the crew had been proved innocent. We all thought it was very good of him to admit that.

But the second morning after the search there was a rare to-do. Every one of the passengers had been relieved of his or her valuables during the night! Merino himself had lost two rings and some cash, but the other eight had lost all. I reckoned it up, and the haul of the thief reached nigh on a thousand pounds!

"I can't stand this," I exclaimed when the news reached me. "I'll turn the ship inside out but what I'll find it!"

The gentlemen were in a rage—even the Spaniard lost his temper and said things in a foreign language that sounded wicked to me. But perhaps they were prayers; I don't care about taking away a man's character when I don't understand the lingo he's talking.

I had another search, but it was no good. Nothing was found.

That night they all turned in as usual, and I suppose they went to sleep some time during the darkness. It was my turn to take the "captain's watch;" I was too vexed at the mysterious affair to turn in before the watch, so it was past four in the morning when I got the chance. But even then I couldn't sleep, so I threw on my things again and made up my mind to sit in my cabin and smoke.

My cabin was situated amidship, and from my window I could command a view of the whole of the deck. I drew aside the curtain and looked out; it was beginning to get light. To my surprise, I saw the señor on deck. I was about to open my door and go on deck to have a talk to him and ask him to join me in a cigar, when his peculiar movements attracted my attention, and made me hesitate.

He looked carefully round, and then walked cautiously towards the empty cask at which he was accustomed to work on the model. Then he gave another very careful glance round. It was now clear to me that he was looking to see if he was being watched; but why?

Then he turned again to the cask and lifted half the top bodily off the barrel.

I leave you to imagine my astonishment and excitement. I could scarcely contain myself. He cast another hasty glance along the deck, then he dived his hand into the cask and drew from it a small black bag which he quickly concealed beneath his coat. Again his hand went towards the cask, but something made him seize the top and replace it quickly.

The cause of this was soon apparent. I saw the bo'sun walking across the deck towards him.

The whole thing flashed across my mind in an instant. I threw open my door and hurried on deck. During the few seconds that passed while I was leaving the window and opening the door, the bo'sun had dashed upon our amiable passenger; so, when I looked again, they were struggling desperately together.

The bo'sun was no chicken, but he had all his work cut out with the Spaniard, and there is no telling how it would have gone had they been left to themselves; but I was on the spot like a flash and we soon had Merino a prisoner.

So this very pleasant young foreigner was the thief after all! The loss of his watch was a get-up to enable him to get an idea of the extent of the valuables on board and—by means of the search—where they were placed. He was a very skilful thief to have managed the robbery in the night. He had secreted the things in two small bags which he hung on nails inside the cask. The way he had faked that cask was very ingenious.

To say that the passengers and everybody else were amazed would be putting it mildly. Nobody suspected him for a moment, except the old salt who had been so annoyed at having his things searched and who had kept a watch on him and discovered the little game.

We handed him over to the authorities on landing, but as no one wanted to stay long in Melbourne, we asked the magistrate to deal summarily with the case. So Merino got off lightly with six months' imprisonment.

I always remember to this day what a very pleasant passenger he was, and regret that a man who could be so agreeable should have turned out such a rogue.

You will get a complete shilling novel and a coloured plate with HOME NOTES published on February 19th, and every subsequent number—all for a penny.

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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BLOCKADED.

THE searchlights flashed out instantly from fore and aft and swept a wide area of the sea, but they only revealed a brief and fleeting glimpse of the flying yacht, for by this time the *Minnehaha's* topmasts were down, her funnels were painted black, her decks covered with black tarpauling, and her white stern and quarters also shrouded in black. And so, with her stern pointed to the *Pocahontas* and affording the least possible object of vision, the saucy little *Minnehaha* raced away at her full thirty-three knots an hour out of the field of light and into the darkness of the great ocean that stretched away to the north-eastward.

"I reckon we fooled 'em pretty slick that time," said Captain Peters to Madame Sybil, who, finding sleep impossible owing to the heat of the night, had left her state-room to come up to the bridge again.

"I really do hope you've given them the slip, Captain," she replied with a little shiver. "I was beginning to be afraid that they would fire one of those big guns at us. I think they would have sunk us if they had done."

"Well, ma'am," said the skipper with a little twist of his beard, "you see the shells from those six-inch guns weigh a hundred pounds apiece, and I guess if one of them hit us and bust anywhere in the veecinity of our boilers the *Minnehaha* wouldn't be good for much except scrap-iron, and that'd have to be dredged for. Still them dynamite guns of ours are mighty handy pepper-boxes, and if we got the drop on them at a good range I don't know that we couldn't keep our end up, for all they carry in the way of heavier metal. But to my mind, running's much more our game than fighting. I hope the Seenyor'll think so too. Buccaneering is a darned sight healthier in a dime novel than on the high seas at this time of day."

"I quite agree with you, Captain," she replied with another shiver, "and I most sincerely hope that Mr. Lorrain will be guided by you. Now I think I'll say good-night again. There is rather too much wind up here for comfort."

As she went down the steps from the bridge Captain Peters looked after her dim white form and said to himself, "That's a mighty fine woman. I guess she wasn't far from the front row when faces were being handed round. Anyhow she's a darned sight too good for that greasy little porpoise that's got her in tow now, and I shouldn't wonder if she was a widow again before long.

"The Seenyor won't have any further use for His Excellence now, if he's located old Christoval's treasure-chest, and I don't think he's just the sort of man to keep useless things like that hanging around any longer than he's got to. She'd suit me all over the back from what I've seen of her so far. A fine woman. Yes, sir, a darned fine woman!"

Meanwhile Madame Sybil had sought a sheltered corner of the deck, and as she sat there with her eyes shut and the swish of the water rushing past the vessel's sides ringing in her ears, her thoughts went back some seven years to that open grave on the little coral island where the first chapter of her life-tragedy had been written in blood. Now that tragedy seemed to be drawing to a climax. How would it end?

What she had said to Captain Peters on the bridge had meant less than nothing. She knew perfectly well that the *Minnehaha's* escape was as hopeless as she had been able to make it. She had an old and bitter grudge to pay off against Lorrain, for she had suffered at his hands the most grievous slight that a man can put on a woman, and now he had murdered her son and, as she believed, robbed her of her one chance of regaining all she had lost and more.

But an opportunity for revenge had come at last. She saw that if the *Minnehaha* were caught in Samana Bay with the treasure on board and the Gold Magnet in the possession either of himself or of the woman who called herself Lady Pendril, not only would his plans be ruined, but the investigation which would be held by the Consul and the commanders of the warships into the disappearance of Sir Harley Pendril and her son could hardly fail to have very serious results for them both.

She had weighed all this very carefully while Captain Peters was telling his story at the palace, and one of her reasons for asking him to delay the sailing of the yacht was to get time to write a letter to Tristam, in which she told him, not only all that she knew, but a little more which she guessed, including of course the destination of the *Minnehaha*.

She had stipulated for half of what might be found in the treasure-chest as the reward for her information, and the risk that she had run in making Lorrain an open enemy, and Tristam had sent a reply back by her own messenger accepting the terms. It was this letter which had brought the *Hermione* and the *New York* on their apparently useless journey, in the wake of the *Pocahontas* and the *Minnehaha*. They were bound for Samana Bay as the *Pocahontas* was, and while Captain Peters was congratulating himself on

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having given them the slip so nicely, the three vessels were steadily ploughing their way round the east of the island to their common destination.

It was towards the evening of the next day that Lorrain and her ladyship, with the remains of the expedition, reached the squalid little town of Savana la Mar. They had brought none of the treasure which the Gold Magnet had pointed out with them. Lorrain had contented himself with digging down into the bank of the stream with his little pick, until he had found the chain attached to the treasure-chest. He had then made a few measurements and a rough plan which no one but himself and his companion could understand, and then he had covered the chain up again and they had left the spot. Her ladyship would dearly have loved to have had a glimpse of the chest itself even if she could not see its contents. Those she was prepared to take on trust, for the present, for the behaviour of the Magnet had shown her that it must have been attracted to the spot by a very large mass of gold. But Lorrain had satisfied her that, all things considered, it would be much better to postpone the pleasure to some other time when circumstances should be more favourable.

There were no signs of either the *Minnehaha* or the *Pocahontas* when they reached the shore, although either of them could have run round from Santo Domingo in a day. From this Lorrain concluded that Captain Peters was lying well out to sea waiting to run in under cover of darkness, and this proved to be correct, for a little after ten o'clock the yacht's long boat grounded on the beach, and Captain Peters himself came up to the camp which they had pitched a little behind the village, which did not boast accommodation for travellers. When he had told his story Lorrain clapped him on the shoulder and laughed.

"Well done, Captain Peters, very well done! We have found where the treasure-chest is, and when it's convenient to go and dig it up you shall have a bit more than your share for bringing my friend the President and Madame Sybil round. That was very clever, and as soon as we're well outside I'll give my little friend Gregorio the choice between a dance at the end of a rope, or the jump from the end of a plank in the good old style. That would have been a very pretty little scheme of his to start Tristram and a squad of men up the river after us. The little blackguard knew perfectly well that there would be a fight if we met and he meant that there should be one, which would have taken the form of a convenient massacre of the survivors by disbanded revolutionists, and His Excellency would have come into a nice little thing. I shall be interested to see what he and Madame Sybil say when they find we haven't brought the treasure with us."

"I guess his Excellence'll be about the maddest man this side of the Arctic circle, and as for Madame, why she'll be a trifle mad, too. Still she might have a chance of some of it later on. To tell you the truth, Seenyor, that's a mighty fine woman, and it wouldn't exactly break my heart to see her a widow."

"A widow!" laughed Lorrain again. "I don't suppose if the truth were known she's anything else now, Captain, but anyhow we'll make quite sure of that to-morrow, if not to-night. You don't strike me as exactly a marrying man, but for all that I wish you the best of good luck in your love-making, or whatever other means you propose to use to bring the lady round to your views. I'll give the bride away with pleasure."

"And I shall be most happy to act as bridesmaid," added her ladyship, who had her own reasons for thinking the arrangement a very satisfactory one.

In a couple of hours the boat had put off again with the remains of the expedition and its impedimenta on board, and for two hours more its six oars propelled it quietly and swiftly over the smooth waters of the bay towards Cape Samana, off which the *Minnehaha* was lying about a couple of miles or so from the land, as Captain Peters had not thought it prudent to take the risk of being blockaded in the Bay.

A single faint light guided the boat to the yacht. The showing of this was an unfortunate necessity, for it also betrayed her whereabouts to the *Pocahontas* and the two cruisers which were lying about five miles farther out, and which so disposed themselves that the *Minnehaha* would be forced to run out to sea between the *Pocahontas* and one of the warships or go dangerously near the shore.

When they got on board the first thing Lorrain did was to send for Madame Sybil and tell her point blank what she and Don Gregorio had been brought on board the yacht for, and how he proposed to punish the President's treachery as soon as they got out to sea. Startling and even terrifying as the news was, she took it with a calmness that would have surprised him less had he known as much as she knew about the *Pocahontas* and her consort. She merely shrugged her shapely shoulders and said:

"Of course, you are master here, Francisco, and you can do as you please. As for Gregorio, well, I am even more tired of him than I got of you, so I don't suppose I shall be inclined to put on weeds for him."

"You are candid, if not very complimentary, my dear Sybil that once was," he replied, with a sneer in his tone that brought the blood to her cheeks. "But I'm glad that you take it so sensibly. By the way, talking about weeds, it may interest you to know that you really are a widow. Our mutual friend Tristam buried your late husband about six months ago up country yonder. We saw the grave a day or two ago, and curiously enough it isn't a thousand miles from the very spot where the treasure-chest is buried. Rather a singular coincidence, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said; "it is. And so poor Arthur is really dead at last. I treated him very badly, didn't I, poor fellow?"

"And yet not quite so badly as you and he treated poor Sir Harry Viney, if his last dying speech and confession to Mr. Tristam was true," added Lorrain.

"What!" she said starting back. "He must have been mad. Besides what was there to tell? Harry died on the island of exposure and fever, and added to that he was very badly injured on the night of the shipwreck."

"Exactly," said Lorrain with a little wave of his hand. "Exactly. He died on the island, and, after all, the particular illness doesn't matter now. You needn't be afraid. You can rely absolutely on my discretion so long as I can rely on yours. And now I would suggest that you should retire and get a little sleep if you can. I don't suppose you will be anxious to see Don Gregorio again, and I will spare your feelings by settling my little account with him before you are up. Good-night and pleasant dreams! Come in. Well, Captain, what is it?"

Captain Peters came into the cabin with a very ugly look on his face.

"It seems to me," he said in an even drier and harder tone that usual, "that someone's been and blown the gaff on us. Anyhow, there's that darned yacht outside and them cruisers on either side of her, and they've got a drop on us with their searchlights so's we can't get away nohow without being seen. Darned if I know how it's happened! Maybe his Excellence might be able to tell us."

Lorrain looked round at Madame Sybil with an expression on his face that she had seen there before, and she gathered from it that something very uncomfortable was going to happen before long. Then he turned to Captain Peters and said:

"That's rather awkward. I was in hopes we should be out before they got here. I have no doubt friend Gregorio left a message for them. Well, we have to get out somehow. Peaceably if they'll let us, but if not I shall fight. You've got plenty of steam, I suppose?"

"You can gamble on that, Seenyor; the Chief ain't quite the man to leave his pets without breath when there's a

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chance of a run on hand. You can have thirty knots right away, I reckon, and five more when they're wanted. And I guess you'll want them too."

"Very well," said Lorrain, getting up from his chair. "If you'll go and have everything ready I'll be on deck in a very few minutes. Stand straight out to sea at ten knots, and have the ammunition out and the guns loaded. Send someone to rouse up the President and tell him I want him on deck at once. Sybil, if you can keep awake for another hour or two you will probably see something interesting now. I'm going to wake her ladyship up to see the fun. There'll be room for both of you in the wheel-house if you would like to go up there. If there is any shooting it won't be more dangerous there than in any other part of the yacht, for if one of their big shells hits us it will sink us, I suppose, and you may as well be drowned in the fresh air as in the cabin."

When they got up on to the bridge Lorrain saw that the *Pocahontas* and her consort evidently meant business. Their searchlights flooded the water, and the yacht was an easy mark for their guns. When the astonished President came up he said to him with a harsh ring in his voice that made the little man feel anything but comfortable:

"Don Gregorio, you've been playing me false——"

"By the Holiest Mother, Don Francisco——"

"That'll do. I don't want any more lies. You know how I deal with anything like treachery. No, it's no good trying to kneel down, and if you kick up a row I'll have you gagged."

Don Gregorio was already grovelling at his feet, praying and whining for mercy in mingled English and Spanish, but Lorrain soon cut this short by ordering a couple of quartermasters to pick him up and tie him to the starboard end of the bridge. Then he slipped his arm through her ladyship's and drew her to the other end, leaving Madam Sybil to her own devices in the wheel-house.

"Are you really going to fight them all, Francisco?" she said, after a quick, half-frightened glance about her. "Surely this one little ship won't be anything like a match for them!"

"I shan't fight at all if I can help it, Jessie," he said, "for this is distinctly a case for running away if I can manage it in safety, but if I have to fight I will, and if I do get out and Tristam persists in following me, he'll get hurt. I shall try and give the two cruisers the slip, and then if he likes to follow, he can do it at his own risk. It's rather a curious situation. They have no real right to stop me or even to follow me about like this, and yet I can only stop them by committing an act of piracy which would make me an outlaw and render the *Minnehaha* liable to be sunk on sight. And yet, you see, if I don't stop them and if I can't run away from that infernal ship of Tristam's, he can follow us all the world over if he likes and have us both arrested the first chance he gets in a British port—you for having unlawful possession of the Gold Magnet, and myself on suspicion of having unlawfully disposed of the boy and your late lamented husband."

"Fighting would be better than that, whatever the consequences," she replied, coming closer to him. "Fancy the horror of a trial and all the rest of it! Ugh! I hope we get away all safe."

"Well, we'll have a try anyhow, and it shan't be my fault, dear, if we don't. Captain Peters, are those guns ready?"

"They are, Seenyor, and we've a full head of steam whenever you want it."

"Very well then, quicken her up to twenty knots and see if you can run through between the land and that cruiser."

The cruiser was the *New York*, and as the *Minnehaha* swung round and put on speed she too quickened up and stood in towards the land as though to head her off.

Lorrain watched her for a few moments as though calculating his chances, and then he said in a low, sharp tone to the Captain:

"We can just do it I think. I shan't fire unless he does, but we must be ready. Full speed ahead now, every ounce you've got!"

Captain Peters sent the signal down to the engine-room and repeated it, and the next minute the whole vessel was throbbing and quivering and panting like a labouring, living thing in agony. Her stern seemed to sink into the boiling mass of foam churned up by her whirling screws, and her sharp, graceful bows rose till the fore-foot was out of the water. The captain of the *New York* saw that in a few minutes she would slip through between him and the land, and he knew that if she once did that she was lost, for the *Pocahontas* was a couple of miles away at least, and the enormous speed of the *Minnehaha* would very soon take her out of range of the searchlights.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Gone Away!

So fast were the two vessels going that it was a matter of some little difficulty to keep the light on the *Minnehaha*, and every now and then she seemed to change from substance into shadow, but when she was about a thousand yards away a combined glare fell on her deck again. The captain of the *New York* saw the long, wicked-looking dynamite guns trained on to his own vessel and the men standing beside them ready to open fire.

"I can't stand that!" he said, taking his glasses from his eyes. "I don't know whether she's bound for Cuba or not, but she's going that way and that's near enough for us. We'll try what a four-inch shell over her bows will do."

A few moments later those on board the *Minnehaha* saw a pale flash leap from one of the cruiser's forward broadside port-holes. The gunner had miscalculated the speed of the yacht and the shot, instead of passing, as was intended, across her bows, went over them, striking the man on the look-out and killing him instantly.

"First blood!" said Lorrain with a note almost of exultation in his voice. "Now I think we can give Uncle Sam a lesson in the new gunnery. Ready with those after-guns there! We are round the Point now. Lay her dead stern on to the cruiser, Captain. Then you and Mr. Lennox take a gun apiece. Go for his funnels and top-works. Don't let a light be shown on the ship."

The *Minnehaha* swung half round and at once vanished out of the field of the searchlights. The next instant there was a little flash of fire from her stern, then another and another, and within the next few seconds nearly forty pounds of dynamite had exploded on board the *New York*, for as long as the searchlight was not falling full on the *Minnehaha* it made a splendid mark and every shell went home.

The damage done by the dynamite was of course immense in proportion to the size of the shells which carried it. The steel armour of the deck and the casemates was burst in and split up. One shell had passed into the forward upper battery and burst inside it, killing every man and disabling every gun in it. The third had struck the forward funnel and instantly reduced it to a crumpled mass of old iron. The speed of the *New York* at once dropped from twenty to about fifteen knots. A few moments later every gun that could be brought to bear on the flying yacht, which was now only a dim little shadow on the dark oily water, burst into thunder and flame, and a perfect storm of projectiles from eight inch shell to Gatling bullets went hurtling and hissing through the night.

Lorrain had anticipated this, and as he had fired his third gun he ordered the helm to be put over, and the nimble little craft spun round and darted away at right angles to her former course. The result was that when the shot storm arrived she had left, and several hundred pounds worth of Uncle Sam's ammunition plunged with a great splash uselessly into the sea.

"That'll do for her, I think," said Lorrain. "They won't

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get twelve knots out of her now the funnel's gone. Here come the others. Now, Captain Peters, that one to the left is the English cruiser. I'll give you £500 if you'll do the same thing to one of her funnels, or both. You've got her dead on now. Hit her hard! If we can make her drop back out of range the thing will be evened up a bit. Steady the helm, get her dead stern on. Now I think you've got her."

Captain Peters "let her go," just as the *Minnehaha* rose on a long swell and the *Hermoine* was sliding down the slope of another one. His glasses showed Lorrain a bright flash bursting out close beside the six-inch quick firer on the *Hermoine's* fore-deck, and the next instant her searchlight vanished.

"Good, but not quite good enough, Captain!" said Lorrain. "Still, you must have done something besides putting the searchlight out, or he would have answered with that big gun before now. Let's see what you can do, Mr. Lennox."

The chief officer had meanwhile been watching his opportunity, and, as the fast-flying *Minnehaha* rose on top of another swell, and the range-finder showed that the gun was truly laid, he dispatched his projectile. It struck the cruiser somewhere on the side, probably on the superstructure, and as it burst it must have done some damage. At the same moment the *Hermoine* opened fire herself, although there was very little to shoot at, for the *Minnehaha* was now nearly four miles away. A couple of six-inch shells burst on either side of her, but did no damage, and meanwhile Captain Peters fired on the flash, and again, thanks partly to his own skill and partly to the perfect automatic aiming apparatus attached to the guns, the shell dropped on the *Hermoine's* deck amidships. She answered, but the shot dropped short a couple of hundred yards behind the *Minnehaha*.

"That'll do, Captain," said Lorrain. "If you haven't stopped him he's lost the range, and that comes to the same thing. It's splendid shooting and worth the money. Now we've only got our good friend Tristam to deal with. I think he's within range. Try a sighting shot at him. We shall have to fight it out now, whatever the end of it is."

Captain Peters fired almost as the last word left his lips, and at the same moment a burst of flame came from the decks of the *Pocahontas*. A six-inch shell went screaming through the air just over their heads, but a ripping and splintering about the deck and one or two shrill cries of pain showed that the projectiles from her lighter batteries had taken effect. One of these had also chipped a piece out of the side of one the *Minnehaha's* funnels, and the imperfect draught at once began to tell on her steaming power.

Captain Peters was immediately equal to the occasion, and after clapping a sheet of canvas over the wound in the outer skin he lashed it firmly on and stationed a man by it with a mop and a bucket of water to keep it cool. On the other hand those on board the *Pocahontas* found that firing their heavy guns dead ahead perceptibly diminished their speed, and the two lieutenants decided to content themselves for the present with the three-pound and four-pound quick-firers which could be trained dead ahead.

The *Minnehaha* of course showed no lights, but her pursuer was forced to keep her searchlight going even to catch an occasional glimpse of her, and this searchlight afforded Captain Peters a very convenient mark. In fact his twelve-pound dynamite shells kept dropping in such unpleasant proximity and burst with such well-timed precision in the water, that the two lieutenants, who now had charge of the ship, felt obliged to order all non-combatants below, an order which Courtland and Tristam flatly refused to obey, although they were very careful to see that the ladies did so.

The two yachts were now doing their utmost, and were flying through the water at a speed never attained by any vessel of their size before. Courtland had promised his stokers a hundred pounds an hour for every knot above thirty that they got out of the engines, with a thousand pounds to the engine-room if the *Minnehaha* was overtaken, and Lorrain had been even more magnificent in his promises; but after all the result of the chase depended as much on the guns as on the engines, for a shot that wrecked a funnel or tore out a plate near the water-line would settle the race in a very short time. Their speed was so nearly equal that if no accident happened to either they might remain within reach of each other for hours.

"I guess, Mr. Lennox, this is getting a bit too sultry to be healthy," said the skipper as another six-inch shell went screaming just over head. "He's only got to hit us once with one of them bottled thunder-storms and then come and pick up the pieces if there's any left. Wait until we rise on the next swell and shoot with me. Go for the light and shade your eyes careful. Ready now. There she goes, rising nicely. Now—let her go!"

The two guns spoke simultaneously. A few moments later the searchlight on the *Pocahontas* vanished in the midst of a blaze of yellow light. Another flash followed instantaneously lower down.

"Good shot, Lennox! I don't know which it was but it's doused his glim anyhow. Now I guess we'd better get out of this track. We hit him pretty hard that time, Seenyor. It wouldn't be a bad thing if we made a due east course now till we've cleared the islands and went and got a bit of breathing room in the Atlantic. These waters are getting a bit too crowded for us according to my way of thinking."

"Yes, that's not at all a bad idea," said Lorrain, "if we really can give that fellow the slip, though I should rather like to know how much we've hurt him before we say good-bye."

"It's a bit risky, Seenyor, unless you're on for a fight to a finish, if you'll excuse me giving an opinion, but if you want to give him the slip we can be ten miles away while he's groping around looking for us now that he's lost his eye. Ah, there goes his after-light again. But see, we're out of range. That means he's falling back, so I reckon we hurt him somewhere in a tender place with those last two shots. Shall we go round, Seenyor?"

Lorrain hesitated for a few moments before he replied. He would dearly have loved a fight to a finish, and if the *Pocahontas* had been alone he would probably have sacrificed his prudence to his hate and continued the fight until one of the two had gone to the bottom. But there were the other two cruisers coming up behind. He could see their searchlights playing and signalling on the horizon, and before the work was over one or both of them would come up, and then it might not be the *Pocahontas* that would go to the bottom. He thought of Jessie, too, and the Gold Magnet and its wonderful possibilities, and he felt a natural inclination to try them a little further after the wonderful, if unsatisfactory, proof he had had of them up the Ozama. So, after a brief debate with himself, prudence got the upper hand and he turned to Captain Peters and said:

"Well, yes, perhaps that's the best thing to do. There's no point in fighting the three of them and getting blown out of the water. Put her due east and go ahead for all she's worth."

"Right, Seenyor!" was the reply, and the word was at once passed to the wheel-house to alter the course to due east.

Lorrain then went forward and met her ladyship just coming from the bridge.

"Well?" she said; "is it all over?"

"It is all over for the present, your ladyship," he said. "We've managed to give them the slip without getting very much damaged, and now you see we are practising the better part of valour. I should very much have liked to stop and have it out with friend Tristam and, if possible, given him and his wife and perhaps Miss Harley, too, the

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pleasure of our hospitality for a little. It would have been a pleasant little change for you to entertain your late mistress and her friends here, wouldn't it?"

"I don't know," she said rather dubiously. "Your hospitality seems to have rather unpleasant consequences sometimes, and I'm afraid you'd do something horrible to them. By the way, may I ask what you're going to do with the President?"

"Hang him at daybreak!" said Lorrain shortly. "The treacherous little hound isn't fit to live. That's all the hospitality he's going to get, the little rat. Quite good enough for him. But if I had Tristam and his wife safe on board, I should feel inclined to take them down to Trinidad and tie them up to a couple of rocks face to face, so that each could watch the land-crabs pick the other one's bones. But perhaps I may have that pleasure yet. I've not done with them by any means."

"And what about madame yonder?" she asked, with a little motion of her head towards the bridge where Sybil was talking to the still captive President.

"Well, I suppose I should be justified in stringing her up beside him," he said, wondering whether her ladyship had any idea of the cause that Sybil had to hate him. "It's just possible, you know, that she may have had as much to do with putting those cruisers on our track as Gregorio had, but still, although I have no very particular reason to love her, I hardly think I could bring myself to perpetrate such woeful waste of handsome femininity as that. Physically, at any rate, she's a great deal too good for hanging."

"Then why not bestow her on the gallant captain?" said her ladyship, with a malicious little laugh. "What a pair they would make, and what a life he'd lead her! Can't you imagine what a hateful little tyrant he'd be as a husband?"

"Yes, that's not at all a bad idea," said Lorrain. "The skipper as a married man would be distinctly a study in matrimony, and if Madame Sybil doesn't like it, well, I'll give him carte blanche to make her."

"Capital!" she said. "And now that we have so far settled our domestic affairs, may I ask what we are going to do next? Are you going to the island to find the old treasure-ship?"

"No," he said. "I'm afraid I can't do that yet. You see, Tristam knows about its being there, and as he's lost us he'll go and look for it. He knows that you are here, and will therefore guess that you've told me about it, so the odds are that by the time we got to work he'd turn up with the two cruisers, and take the lot of us prisoners. No, I've been thinking a good deal the last hour or two—I always do think well when there's any excitement on—and I've come to the conclusion that we may as well fly at higher game. You see we're pirates now, just as much pirates as any lot of ruffians who ever flew the Jolly Roger. We have fired on two warships and a private yacht, and hurt them badly. We've probably killed several men fighting under the British and American flags, and so, as we have graduated in the profession, we may as well go ahead.

"Now there are plenty of treasureships besides that old Spanish one on the Cay, which may or may not have anything in it. The rivers will be opening in a week or two up in Alaska and the gold will be coming down in millions from Klondyke. That's the sort of happy hunting-ground for us. We know there'll be gold in those ships and we shall be able to clear half a dozen of them out before any one can stop us. We can be round in less than a month if it's decent weather. Of course we may have to collar a steamer or two and take her coal out, but we can't help that. I don't see why we shouldn't have a royal time and make millions in a few months. Then we'll buy some more ships like this and a slice of nice territory somewhere in South America, or else an island in some pleasant out of the way situation and start a kingdom on our own account. How does that strike your ladyship?"

"Glorious!" she said. "I can fancy myself a pirate queen."

"I'm glad you said queen," he replied, slipping his arm round her waist, "because that implies a king, and there isn't going to be any other king in that country——"

"But your noble self, I suppose?" she interrupted, looking up with a smile that was half shy and half saucy.

"Exactly," he said, stooping and kissing her. "And now I think it about time your majesty went to bed. When you come on deck to-morrow you will find yourself a good distance on your way to El Dorado in the north. Good-night!"

(To be continued.)

A Fine February

MAY OR MAY NOT BE PREDICTED BY THE WEATHER PROPHETS, BUT WE CAN GUARANTEE

A Fine February Number

OF

PEARSON'S MAGAZINE

JUST GLANCE OVER THE CONTENTS:

ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK. This feature includes beautiful reproductions of some of the finest pictures ever painted, as well as some interesting notes about the painters themselves and art matters generally.

HOW SOLDIERS FIGHT. In this magnificent article Mr. Connell gives a splendid description of the duties of a cavalry man on the field of battle. The illustrations, by Mr. Stanley L. Wood, are very striking.

REAL GHOST STORIES. By E. and H. Heron. No. II.—The Story of Medhans Lea. Illustrated by B. E. Minns. (A complete story.)

NEW KINGS ON OLD THRONES. By B. Waters. There are many people in England—far more than one would think—who cherish the belief that Queen Victoria is not the rightful occupant of the Throne. An interesting account of the societies they have formed, of the personality of the lady whose cause they espouse, and the life she is now leading, is set forth in this article.

THE POWDER PLAY. By A. J. Dawson. Illustrated by Warwick Goble. (A complete story.)

ONLY A VAGABOND. By Philip Hemery.

THE LIGHT WEIGHTS OF NAVAL WARFARE. By George Griffith. The author of this article was accorded special permission to be present on the trial-run of one of the speediest torpedo-boat destroyers yet built for the British Government, and his vivid description of the trip is now published for the benefit of the readers of the *Magazine*. Some striking photographs and illustrations accompany the article.

A BOOM IN THE DEVIL'S GULCH. By Merridan Howard. Illustrated by D. Murray Smith. (A complete story.)

THE GARDEN OF EDEN DISCOVERED. By Herbert C. Fyfe. Mr. Seton-Karr, the famous explorer, has been good enough to place at our disposal an account of his wonderful discovery in Somaliland, together with the beautiful photographs which he took during his wanderings through the country.

THE SPELL OF THE SWORD. By Frank Aubrey. Illustrated by A. Jule Goodman. A complete story by the author of one of the strangest and most popular novels of the year.

YOUR SONG. By J. J. Bell. Illustrated by Hana.

FREAKS. By J. R. Creed. Many cases have been known of men and women who have had horns growing from their heads. The illustrations here given of the most curious of these deformities are very remarkable. It is surprising to notice that the horns are in some instances quite ornamental.

A QUESTION OF RIGHT OF WAY. By C. K. Burrow. Illustrated by E. F. Sherie. (A complete story.)

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THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. One of Captain Kettle's most exciting adventures.

TOTEMS. By Laura B. Starr. An interesting article on a curious subject, profusely illustrated with curious photographs.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. Mr. Alden is particularly amusing this month. He discourses upon the troubles and worries of neckties, plain boiled potatoes, blunt razors, newsboys, and waterproof boots.

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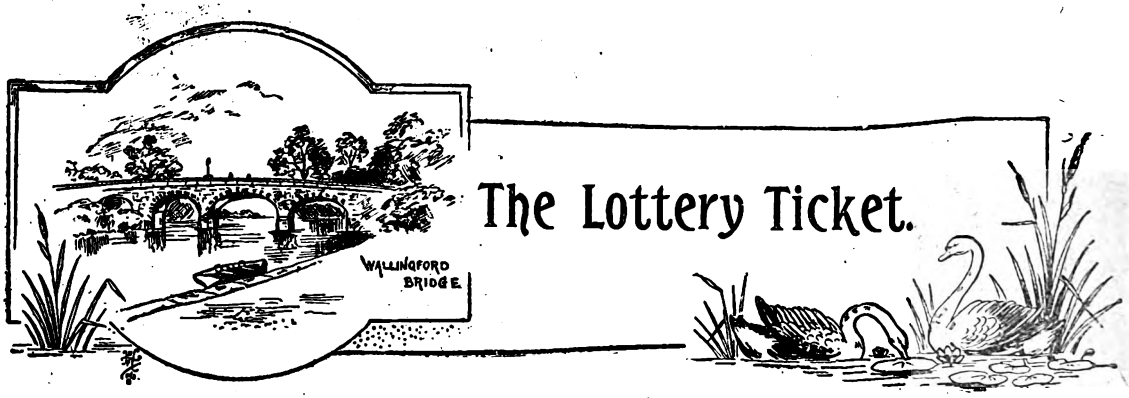

The Lottery Ticket.

So you want to hear the story of my marriage? Listen then, and you will say that it is an odd one.

It was late—near midnight—one cold, stormy night. I came out of a café, when a slender little girl, with dishevelled hair and wrapped in an old ragged shawl, begged me to buy the tenth of a lottery ticket. I took it and gave her an enormous sum—in her estimation—for it. I gave her a *peso*. Her sweet smile fully repaid my generosity.

"It will bring you luck, señorito," she affirmed, with the soft, clear pronunciation of the girls of Madrid.

"Are you sure?" I asked jokingly, as I slipped the ticket in my overcoat pocket, and folded my silk muffler closely round my throat, to protect me from the chill December winds.

"Of course I'm sure of it! Just as sure as you are that you have bought the ticket. The number—you watch the list when it comes out—is 1420; the exact number of the years of my life, fourteen, and the days of the month over, twenty. I wish I had bought the whole of the ticket instead of the tenth."

"Well, child," I responded, with the generosity, and tranquility of an old gambler who knows that he has never gained a cent, "don't worry, if the ticket draws a prize half of the tenth is for you and half for me."

"Señorito, for Heaven's sake, tell me your name, your street and number. I know that in four days more we shall win the grand prize."

I hesitated for a moment, then told her my name and where I lived. Ten minutes later, when I hurried through the Puerta del Sol to the Calle de la Montara, I had completely forgotten the incident.

Four days passed. I was still in bed one morning about ten o'clock, when I heard the "grand list" being called out through the streets. I sent my servant out to buy one, and when he brought it to me, my eyes immediately fell upon the number of the first prize. I thought I must be dreaming! No, I was awake! there it was! 1420—my tenth part of the ticket, the age of the seller, and good luck for her and me! Those blessed cyphers represented many thousand duros.*

I got up hastily, completely overwhelmed by my good luck, my legs shook, and cold perspiration came out all over my body. Do me the justice to believe that I never for one moment thought of taking back my offer. The little girl had brought me luck, she had been my mascot! It was a business transaction! We must divide the gains!

*A duro equals four shillings.

Then it occurred to me to take a look at the ticket I remembered perfectly that I put it in an outside pocket of my overcoat in order not to unbutton it. Where was my coat? Ah, there, hanging on its hook. I searched that overcoat thoroughly. Not a sign of the ticket.

I shouted furiously to the man and asked him if he had shaken my coat out of the window. Of course he had shaken it and brushed it carefully, but he had seen nothing drop out of the pockets, absolutely nothing! I looked at him, his face showed his veracity and honour. During the five years he had been in my service I had never detected him in the smallest theft.

I blush now when I think how I swore at that poor fellow.

I was frantic over my loss. I lighted a candle and searched in every corner, emptied my wardrobes, looked over my old papers, and carefully investigated the waste-paper basket. Nothing! Nothing! My hands were burning, my mouth dry, my heart filled with rage.

Late in the afternoon, I was lying on the lounge, smoking and still pondering over my horrible disappointment, when I heard a sharp ring at the bell, the sound of a discussion at the door, the protestations of someone who wished to enter, and then there appeared before me the little lottery ticket seller, who threw herself into my arms, with tears in her eyes, crying: "Señorito, señorito, we have drawn the grand prize!"

Alas for me! I fancied that I had already gone through the worst of my trouble, but I was mistaken. I had to tell this poor little girl, stammering like a criminal all the while, that I had lost the ticket, I could not find it anywhere, and therefore she could expect nothing from me.

I dreaded to see the look of sorrow and distrust come into those beautiful brown eyes.

But the little girl, raising her head, looked at me serenely and said, shrugging her shoulders: "Well, señorito, you and I were not born to be millionaires."

How could I repay the confidence of that disinterested child? How could I make fitting compensation for what I owed her? Yes, what I owed her!

My remorse and the conviction of my grave responsibility weighed upon me so heavily that I sent her to my mother to be well brought up. I educated her and finally married her.

And the most notable part of this story is that I have been perfectly happy ever since.

Emilia Bazan.

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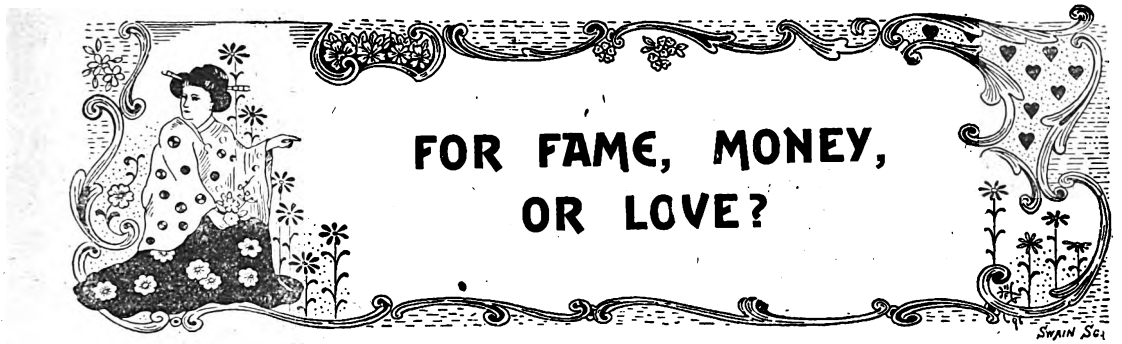

I was supremely happy. I use the superlative because, in all truth, I had never been so happy before. The cause of this ecstatic condition was the very ordinary fact that I had asked Beatrice Alden to be my wife, and she had consented.

I do not know what other men have felt under similar circumstances, but I can assure you that I felt and thought myself a very superior sort of being. I held myself very erect as I walked down the Strand on my way to my office.

Perhaps it might even be said that I "strutted." I don't know, certainly. I believe that I blindly walked into several persons. I have an indistinct notion of apologising more than once.

At any rate, I am confident that I was excusable under the circumstances. A man feels such sensations as I was experiencing only once in a life time. This was my turn at happiness, as it were.

I remember that I walked that morning because I felt compelled. I started in a 'bus, but abandoned the stuffy vehicle after a few yards. I could not endure confinement at such a time. You see, I was so happy. And yet, when I look back upon that moment now, and view my situation critically, I see that had I been perfectly sane, I must have realised that I was actually in a serious predicament.

I had asked Beatrice to marry me, and she had accepted in a dainty little note which greeted me at breakfast.

It had been a most foolhardy piece of presumption on my part to propose to her, for the reason that I often found it difficult to pay my own bills. How then could I meet even the expense of feeding and clothing a handsome woman accustomed to the good things of life—to say nothing of providing for the possibilities of the future?

I had known Beatrice for only a few months, but with me it had been love at first sight. I had devoted all of my spare time and most of my cash to the gratification of her little desires. I paid her marked attention, and, before long, became satisfied that she was not indifferent to my suit.

Discretion whispered to me to wait until I had built my dove cot before catching the dove, but love shrieked in my ears day and night: "Take her now or you will lose her." This seemed quite possible, for she was constantly surrounded by an admiring circle of men wherever she went.

My final proposing had been precipitated the night before by a streak of jealousy which overtook me whilst at the opera. I had bought a box, at considerable pecuniary sacrifice, and she and her mother had accompanied me. Much to my disgust, several men dropped in to visit, and remained to converse.

One man, who posed in society as a German count, particularly annoyed me. He monopolised Beatrice as though she were his personal property. Worse than that, she seemed quite willing for him to do so. I think, now, that this was but a feminine trick to make me anxious, and so hurry the crisis.

At least, it accomplished that result, for I left the box, obtained writing materials, and penned a formal proposal of marriage, which I slipped into her hand at parting. The result was the afore-mentioned note of acceptance, and the coincident happiness that this morning had already reached the pitch where I longed for a confidant.

It was in this frame of mind that I entered the building wherein I occupied a suite of two small rooms, upon the door of which appeared my name.

As I stood waiting for the lift, I mechanically allowed my eyes to run down a list of names of the other occupants. Suddenly my attention was arrested by one which seemed quite familiar—that of Andrew Manning. I had known a man by that name at Oxford, where we had been close friends. Then he went abroad and I had never seen him since.

On the way up I spoke to the lift boy, and my curiosity was whetted. From his account it seemed that this Andrew Manning not only had his business offices in the building, but had taken a large suite there, where he lived in bachelor style.

I at once sought his rooms. The office door was still locked, but upon wringing the bell of the next door, I was received by a servant, who, in response to my inquiries, said that Mr. Manning had gone out to breakfast, but would soon return.

Upon expressing a wish to wait, I was ushered into a really cosy apartment, which at first impressed me as the most luxuriously comfortable little box that I had ever entered. The next moment I experienced a sensation of oddity in my surroundings, the cause of which I was at a loss to name, as everything seemed so entirely in keeping with everything else that there was no incongruity. Yet there was an unconventionality about that assailed the senses.

At length I discovered the primary cause. The walls, ceiling, and carpet were black. The latter, upon closer scrutiny, I found was not a solid black, as it appeared, but a black background into which figures were interwoven in dark blue. The effect was very rich. The walls were covered with jet-black cartridge paper, but this was relieved at intervals by small *fluer-de-lis* in burnished blue steel.

The ceiling was covered with the same paper, studded

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with silver stars, arranged exactly as are the constellations in the heavens. In one corner was a crescent moon, which could be illuminated with electricity so as to light the room at night. A few of the planets could also to be made to serve as electric lamps.

The sombreness which would ordinarily prevail in such a room was entirely obviated by the furnishings. Rich Dagnestan rugs and heavy silk Oriental portières in warm colours, partly lightened up the prevailing blackness, whilst the walls were so covered with pictures in gilded frames that the papering served only to heighten the general effect. The furniture was all in bright though not gaudy colours. After taking in my surroundings in a general view, I began to walk round for closer inspection of the pictures, many of which I found to be rare gems. Presently I stopped before a frame which excited my curiosity to the utmost. Whereas the other pictures had all been paintings in water colour, or in oil, this was merely a photograph, a portrait of a woman. That much I could discern, though I could not see the features.

What riveted my attention was this. The photograph was cabinet size, placed in rather a large frame, surrounded by a wide mat. Covering the picture entirely was a black veil, folded several times and fastened to the glass at each corner by a red seal. This arrangement in itself was curious enough, but the mystery was heightened by the fact that a small gold hook had been driven into the upper edge of the frame, and that from this hook was suspended a bit of blue ribbon, at each end of which was attached a solitare diamond ring.

What could it mean? I had barely asked myself the question when a footstep in the adjoining room warned me that Manning had returned. Reflecting that after all it might not be my friend, and that, in any event, it would not be pleasant to be caught in front of a picture so suggestive of a secret history, probably of a personal character, I hastily stepped across the floor and dropped into a chair.

The next moment Manning entered, and, though changed, I at once recognised him as my old college chum. I arose and greeted him effusively, as was natural in my happy fame of mind. He took my hand cordially, remembering me also, but his manner was by no means demonstrative.

On the contrary, I detected a certain reserve, a sort of dignified quietness of speech, which at first jarred upon me. Indeed, I felt almost as though I had made a mistake in calling and that my old friend was not overjoyed in renewing my acquaintance. In this, however, I was entirely wrong, for upon my attempting to depart he peremptorily insisted upon my remaining to talk over old times.

After that we became almost chummy—at least, I did, though he still exhibited that phlegmatism which was so foreign to his character, as I recalled it. Finally, in spite of this reserve, I began to feel so much at home with him that I ventured to direct the conversation to the veiled picture.

"I suppose, Andrew," said I, "you must have trave'led in many countries since we last met; you have brought home such a number of curios from foreign climes."

"Another evidence, my friend," he replied, "of a poor deduction from good premises. Most of the pictures and *bric-à-brac* about this room attest a personal collection in many countries. But there their value as evidence ceases. I did not collect them myself; I simply inherited them."

"Inherited them?" I asked. "Why, none of your family have died, I hope?"

"No but a very dear friend. You may even remember him. He was at Oxford with us a short time—Julius Kraig!"

"Not the tall blonde fellow who was crazy on the subject of music?"

"The same. He went abroad immediately after graduation, and travelled everywhere. I eventually met him in Paris. We became great friends, and remained so till he died."

"What a pity that he should have died so young; for though we used to guy him I always thought that he had the seeds of genius in him." Here I determined to venture upon a bold stroke. "But tell me, Manning, why do you drape his picture with crepe?"

"How do you mean? Oh, I see! You have been looking round my room and allude to the veiled picture. You are wrong. That is not Kraig's portrait, though the crepe, as you term it, is there as a memento of him."

"In what way? I do not understand."

"My dear fellow, you have unwittingly touched upon a subject which is very painful to me; one upon which I seldom speak. But you are my old college chum, and I see that, unlike myself, you have retained your youth. I will tell you the story of that picture if you wish, but I warn you that it might be better for you not to hear it."

"Why? How can it affect me?"

"By shattering some of your ideals. By affecting your faith in human kind. Shall I tell you?"

"If you please!" I was too anxious to hear the story to hesitate for such a seeming trifle.

"That you may fully comprehend the strange tale," began Manning, "I must first tell you something about Kraig. As you have admitted, he was a genius. A greater musical genius than his never lived, perhaps, and yet he died without fame, almost unknown! I became very intimate with him shortly after reaching Paris. He had a bachelor suite on the Rue de la Paix. His principal room, a combination of dining-room, smoking-room and study, was fitted up exactly as this one is, with the exception of that picture which is veiled. Even the wall paper and ceiling I brought over with me."

He paused, and I stared about with renewed interest in my surroundings. I began almost to feel that it was uncanny, this scheme of inheriting a man's belongings, and perpetuating his living-rooms to such an extent as Manning had done. One could almost fancy that, if such things can be, Kraig's ghost would be about the place.

"Kraig had an odd theory about music," resumed Manning. "His idea was like this. A man is an embodied spirit. Thought is an attribute of the spiritual man. Language is, as it were, thought materialised; a necessary form of transmitting thought, essential to the physical man, but not used at all by spirits. In simpler language—articulate words are used by physical man to convey his thoughts to other physical men.

"Some thinkers claim that the spirit not only abandons words, but does not even employ any form of sound to convey thought. Kraig counted this a gross error. He argued that if a spirit could conceive the thought of another spirit, clairvoyantly, magnetically, or in any manner which would exclude the will power of the thinker, it would be manifest at once that thought would be useless, since it would be universally known as soon as conceived. Or, at least, spirits would cease to exist

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as separate individuals, and must necessarily combine as a single mind. Such a theory would destroy utterly our preconceived notions of immortality. The individual would no longer exist as an individual, and at death would simply be swallowed up by this one great spirit mind. This idea is abhorrent to us. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly, thus far," I replied.

"Very well. The next step is to explain Kraig's notion of the transmission of thought in the spiritual world. This is accomplished, he believed, by means of music."

"By music? How ridiculous! Then the angels would all sing to each other."

"Exactly so; but remember, they would not sing words. Words belong to the material sphere. Kraig claimed, with much reason, that the spiritual is present in man, the animal, since man thinks and gives expression to his thoughts. This he does in two ways—by spoken words, the material method; and by music, the spiritual method."

"I don't quite grasp that," I objected.

"Yet it is perfectly simple. Your composer of music is merely a man who thinks out his ideas, and sets them down in musical tones instead of in words. This truth, of course, has not yet been grasped by the multitude, but it is only like the many others that we pass by, because they are so constantly present with us that we do not observe them."

Kraig then argued thus: "Here are two methods of conveying thought-spoken words and music. By the mathematical axiom, 'things equal to the same thing must be equal to one another.' Consequently for every word in a language there must be an exact equivalent in a musical tone, since each represents a thought. The converse is not true, however, for the reason that the language of words is very incomplete, many fine shadings of thought being so incommunicable in one language, that we are forced constantly to borrow from others to meet our wants. Even the sum of all the languages of the earth cannot express thought as accurately as can music, for there must be as many variations of a musical tone as there can be conceivable phases of thought. Thus the spiritual transcends the material."

"But granting all this, to what does it lead?"

"It led Kraig to a wonderful invention. He explained to me that whilst there could be no accurate equivalent of all musical tones in spoken words, at the same time it is quite possible that music composed by a material man would so differ from true spiritual music that, whilst the latter would not be transcribable to human tongue, the former, probably, would contain no ideas that could not be translated into words. This, because the mind in its material environment would not think in music much beyond what the tongue could not express in words. Do you get that?"

"Perfectly."

"Kraig's hope was to invent a new musical instrument which would accurately translate music. To be more explicit, his instrument when played upon would respond, not in ordinary tones, as does the piano, harp, or violin, but in actual spoken words, which words would be the equivalent in thought of the musical tones of the composition. In other words, the instrument, played upon like a piano, would respond somewhat as though a human voice were singing. Thus we should have spoken words and musical tones blended in a single expression of thought. Was not that a grand idea?"

"It sounds like insanity to me," I said dubiously.

"And to me, also, at first. Finally, however, I accepted the whole theory, but endeavoured to discourage Kraig from attempting the impossible. He would listen to my argument and shrug his shoulders with a smile, saying, 'Nothing is impossible. Man may accomplish what he wills! If it is conceivable in thought it is possible! The impossible cannot be conceived. The only difficulty is that the material man may wear out before the spiritual accomplishes his purpose. This, however, is no argument against endeavour, for what is unfinished in this life may be completed in another. We will begin where we left off. So all progress counts in the total sum.'

"Thus, you see, it was not easy to prevent Kraig from pursuing his hobby. Now I come to the story of the picture."

Manning paused a moment, but I remained silent. Presently he began again:

"In Paris I met and loved a beautiful girl. To make this part of my tale brief, I will only say that after a few months' acquaintance I was made excessively happy by her accepting me as her future husband. At the time, I had not seen Kraig for several days. I had never spoken to him of my love, because he always seemed so wrapped up in his music that all other topics of conversation were excluded. It was three days after my engagement when I walked up the stairs that led to Kraig's apartments. I had become so intimate that I did not even knock, but turning the door handle I entered the room—the room which was like this.

"Kraig was not there, but before I could look for him elsewhere I observed a new piece of furniture. It looked like a piano, and yet it was dissimilar, too, being like an upright piano, but double the usual length. Like a flash it dawned upon me that this was Kraig's new instrument. I advanced to examine it, and, raising the lid, I noted the white ivory keys. There were no black ones. My curiosity was at once so great I could not wait for Kraig's return. I was possessed with the desire to hear this instrument sing. I may say sing, because I have no other word that will express it. An evidence, you see of the poverty of language. I touched a key and produced a prolonged 'Oh-h-h,' which was so like grief that I released the note quickly. I glanced round in search of some music, and observed a freshly written manuscript lying upon Kraig's desk. This, evidently, was a composition made expressly for the new instrument. I took it with supppessed excitement, and with trembling fingers I began to play."

"Well?" I asked excitedly, as Manning paused. I was now thoroughly aroused by his weird tale.

"My friend," he continued, "I hope that you will never experience the agony that was mine during the next few minutes. As soon as I pressed the notes indicated in the manuscript, a voice as from another world spoke, or sang, or chanted—what you will; no words can describe it. It was a combination of musical tones of supremest purity with words in English. There was the only incongruity of discord.

"The harsh gutturals of our language sounded out of place, and yet they told a sad tale that has been burnt into my brain.

"I will repeat the words to you. The composition was entitled 'The Wail of a Broken Heart.' The music began in a monotonous but melodious chant, and the opening stanzas were devoted to an impassioned defence of the constancy of men, whose love, so the poet-musician declared, was no less often betrayed than was

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that of women. Then, leaping from the general to the particular the chant continued:

'This I know, that I, myself,
Am just that doting fool that trusted all to one.
She came into my life but five short months ago,
Yet in that brief, sweet space of time, I've dreamed of joy
So great that I have pitied those in Paradise,
Who die unhallowed by such love as I thought mine!

'In these fantastic visions I have seen myself
By emp'rors crowned. In fancy have been hailed
Music's greatest master! Musician, world-renowned!

'But dearer yet than emp'ror's crown, within my heart
I prized the smile of love upon my sweetheart's lips;
For she it was whose sacred love had aided me,
To reach the pinnacle of fame. But these were dreams!'

"Here the melody changed, this time wailing out in mournful cadences the story of how, an hour before, all the composer's hopes had been dispelled by a brief note from the woman he had worshipped.

''Twas thus she wrote: "Forgive me, love!" What mockery
To use that word! "But I must tell the truth. Alas!
I have deceived thee. My love cannot enrich thy life!
I think I have no love—no heart—but in its stead
Ambition stirs my soul. To share thy fame I would
Have joined my life to thine. But I have changed my mind,
And now give all for wealth, which hath the mystic pow'r
To buy whate'er the heart may crave, including fame,
And love, perchance. And so I sell my love for gold!
For wealth I sell myself—and thee! Farewell! Forgive!"

'O God! that one so fair in form should be so foul
In soul! Ah! well! 'Tis over! Ended! Done! But——'

"Here the voice ceased, for the composition had never been completed. By an odd chance, however, I once more rested my hands upon the keys, absorbed amidst a riot of thoughts, when, to my horror, the voice again was heard, a terrifying shriek, ending in a prolonged moan, as from a soul in purgatory. I quickly lifted my hands, and silence reigned. At length this became so oppressive, that I hurried from the room in search of Kraig."

Manning was silent a moment or two, overcome by the emotions aroused by the recollection of the scene which he had depicted.

"I found him in his bedroom," he continued. "He lay prone on the floor, with blood oozing from his mouth. I hastened to him, but he was already dead. A post-mortem became necessary, and it was discovered that the heart muscle had actually been ruptured. He had literally died of a broken heart. I found in his tightly closed hand a copy of the letter referred to in the music. The words were identically the same, so you see how accurately he had transcribed his thoughts into musical composition, and how admirably his instrument had portrayed his emotions as well as his music. The greatest shock to me was yet to come. I found the envelope in which the note had been inclosed, and within it was a diamond ring, one of those now hanging from the ribbon. The inscription gave the name of the girl who had thus rudely sundered her engagement and killed my friend."

"Well?" I muttered, half expecting what he would say.

"Oh, I read there the name of the woman to whom I was engaged, that is all."

He left his seat abruptly, and went to the window, with a low, empty laugh, which made my heart turn chill. I sat silent, with a portentious feeling of some impending evil. I deeply regretted that I had tempted him into this recital. Now, I understood it all. The veiled picture was that woman's portrait. The two rings were her two engagement tokens, presented to her by Kraig and Manning. Presently he turned and came towards me. Standing near me, he continued with perfect control of his voice, and in that phlegmatic tone which now I comprehended—he had learnt self-repression.

"You see," he went on, "poor Kraig, upon receiving that cruel letter, had evidently tried to drown his sorrow in his music. His great instrument had just been completed. Fame was within his grasp when this blow which slew his love came upon him. With indomitable will he at once realised that, while his heart was so stirred, he might, perhaps, compose a masterpiece. So he sat down to write his own sad story in that spirit language, music. It was a master stroke of spirit over matter. His will would surmount the pain that a woman had caused him. Alas! Poor man! Even in the midst of this grand effort of the spirit to show its supremacy, the link that bound his soul to this earth was rudely snapped—his material self ceased to exist. The shock had broken his heart, and so his beautiful spirit was released.

"But I? I was still alive to face precisely the agony which he had thus escaped. The same note which told him that the woman would have married him for his fame, confessed that she accepted me for my wealth. Of course that ended all. I covered her face with the veil, and hung the two rings where you see them. I took Kraig's things and brought them here. His rooms I have reproduced, as you see; and because I wish to live alone, I have done the eccentric thing of making my home in an office building, away from the regular dwellings of the city. A morbid fancy, if you wish to consider it so. As to the wonderful instrument, that was injured on the way over, and was dumb when I opened it. Kraig being dead, there was none who could restore it."

"But what became of the girl?" I asked thoughtlessly.

"I do not know," he said absently. "To me Beatrice is dead!"

"Beatrice?" I asked with sudden surprise. "Did you say Beatrice?"

"Did I?" he asked, still dreamily. "I don't know. Perhaps I did. It was her name. Beatrice Alden."

No sooner had the words fallen from his lips than I started to my feet and rushed from the room. He tried to stay my flight, alarmed, I suppose, by my appearance; but I eluded him and rushed down the stairs and out of the building, never heeding where I went. All I knew was that my happiness had suddenly ceased.

For hours I wandered about the streets like one crazed. When he told me this that she—that woman who had been death to poor Kraig and misery to himself—that she was Beatrice Alden, my Beatrice, the pain at my heart was so keen that I would cheerfully have accepted surcease by sharing Kraig's fate.

At last one ray of hope penetrated to my heart. She had accepted Kraig for his fame, and Manning for his wealth. Why had she accepted me? I have neither genius with which to win fame, nor that wealth which she counts so potent. For love? Why else? Then after all, is not love the greatest power, and has not her heart at last been found by me? Then why not accept the situation, forget this horrible tale, and marry Beatrice?

What would you do in my place?

R. Ottolengui.

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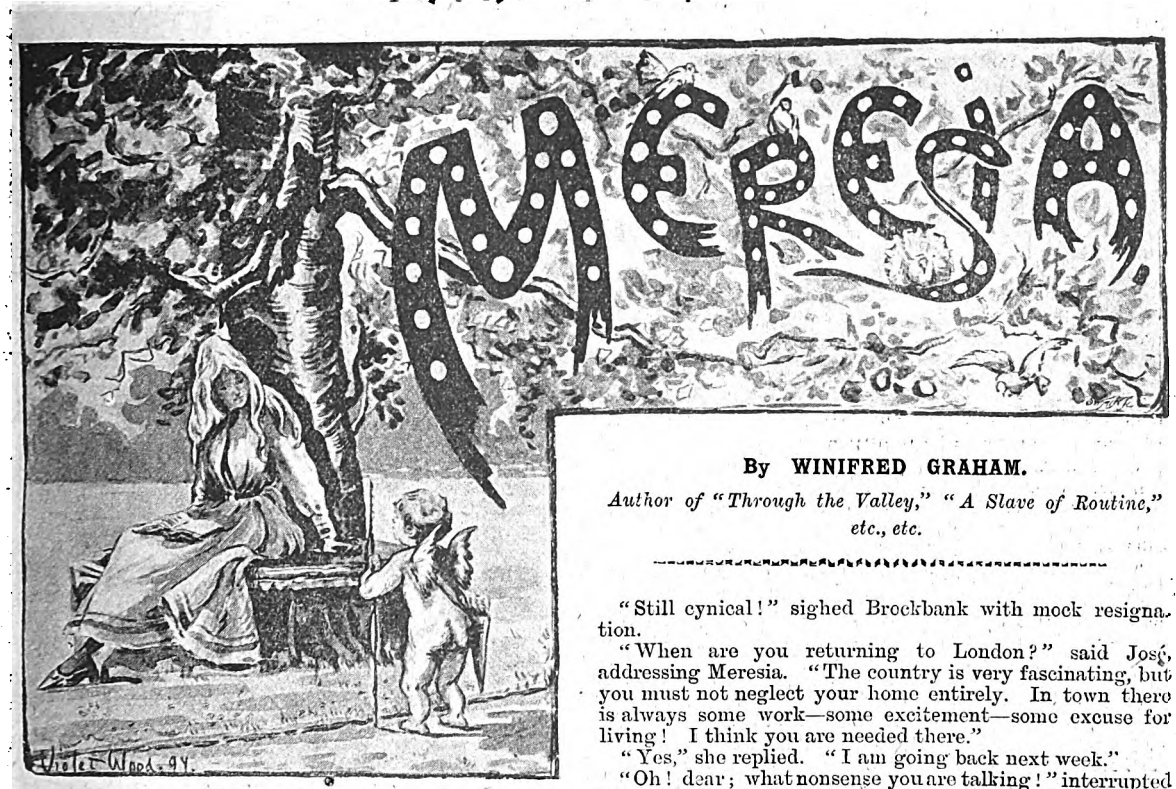

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

I Hold Your Life!

Meresia could get no more conversation alone with José. She noticed he avoided her, and though longing to question him, she still dreaded to hear the worst, and half-welcomed delay.

On Sunday he left, summoned, he said, by letter that morning, to a patient. Herbert Brockbank offered to return with his friend, but the Milfords would not hear of this.

"We certainly cannot spare you before Monday," they said, "if you can endure our country dullness until then."

He accepted their invitation with alacrity, and showed scant disappointment at José's departure.

If Meresia looked troubled, the Doctor made no great contrast to her. He wore the air of an over-worked man—one who has thought deep thoughts and remembered them, and his face had aged considerably since the death of Alfonso Aladros. The boyishness which Bertie Haydon had been frequently privileged to witness was now entirely absent, and fresh lines made themselves visible on José's face.

As he bade Meresia good-bye, few would have taken him for a successful, affluent man.

He was thinner, paler, and bitterer even than in the dark days of his gaoler's life in Madrid.

"You might have the weight of the universe on your shoulders, old man!" said Herbert Brockbank. "I hope it is nothing very serious that calls you back to town?"

"Only the matter of a life in danger—one life is not of much consequence among the millions and millions, is it, Mrs. Aladros?"

He turned to Meresia, who stood by the open door, waiting while his luggage was brought down.

She made no reply, but the colour rushed to her face, and she raised her head as if at an insult.

"Still cynical!" sighed Brockbank with mock resignation.

"When are you returning to London?" said José, addressing Meresia. "The country is very fascinating, but you must not neglect your home entirely. In town there is always some work—some excitement—some excuse for living! I think you are needed there."

"Yes," she replied. "I am going back next week."

"Oh! dear; what nonsense you are talking!" interrupted Mrs. Milford. "I certainly cannot spare you yet, Meresia. Really, Doctor, your bad advice is quite demoralising. She had promised to stay another month at least with us. What attractions can London have for her now, poor darling?"

"Mrs. Aladros has a restless spirit—let her be! Besides, she most kindly accepted a little invitation for next week—only tea at my house with a few favoured friends, Haydon, Miss James, and three or four others. Don't fail to come," turning to Meresia, "I shall expect you on Tuesday at four o'clock!"

It was the first she had heard of the invitation, and guessed this to be merely his way of arranging the meeting of which he had spoken the night before, and as a means of enabling her to return without comment.

Her voice faltered slightly as she replied:

"Yes, I will be punctual—for once!"

Then the carriage drove the Doctor away, leaving her standing hatless on the doorstep beside Herbert Brockbank.

The sun had just come out after a heavy shower, and caught the rich colour of her hair—the trees and the grass sparkled and glistened, decked by thousands of unsubstantial brilliants.

She felt like a skeleton fresh risen from its grave, as she stood in the warm glow. What right had she to be there, in the very heart of living creation? By all the laws of the land she ought long ago to have found a resting place with the shamed and degraded!

Herbert Brockbank smiled as the carriage turned the corner of the drive. He had elected to look upon José as his rival with Meresia, and the absence of a rival is always pleasurable.

"If Serano is to have you on Tuesday," he said, "I, at least, am the more fortunate till Monday. Perhaps you will let me call on you—in London?"

"I don't think I shall stay," replied Meresia; "the house is so empty, desolate, and frightening now that I am alone. I suppose a man cannot realise a woman's horror of being

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left by herself in a house wholly associated in her mind with death, and one dead. It is like living in a tomb."

"I think I understand something of that feeling. Then you will only be in town for one night—only on Tuesday?"

"Ah, Tuesday!" she murmured with a little shudder.

"You don't want to go," he said. "Serano has worried you into it. Why not change your mind?"

Meresia shook her head.

"Ah!" thought the man, "she will not disappoint Serano." Then he said aloud;

"I have not been honoured with an invitation to this tea-party. Serano kindly put me up for a day or two during some alterations that were being done to my rooms, but I am to return to them to-morrow."

"Then I shall not see you, unless you care to call on the chance of finding me in on Wednesday afternoon. I will give you my address."

He eagerly accepted this small advance, and was convinced that the reason Serano had so pointedly left him out of Tuesday's invitation was the jealous fear that he had found favour in the eyes of Mrs. Aladros. He could see that Meresia had something on her mind from repeated little vagaries throughout the day, and the haziness of her conversation.

But she bore these minor trials with a quiet consideration and respectful tenderness that, coming from a comparative stranger, touched Meresia deeply. Her suspense was not so selfish but that she saw and appreciated such little things.

A certain sympathy, wordless, but existing nevertheless, sprang up between them. Meresia no longer felt her way towards this new acquaintance, but established a footing of friendliness that raised him to a seventh heaven of delight.

The following day she took leave of her parents, amid protestations from both, and travelled to town by the same train as Herbert Brockbank—for that he blessed Serano's tea party. At least it gave him a few more hours of her society.

The house felt terribly deserted as Meresia entered it, and met again the various objects that reminded her of the dead. They seemed to obtrude themselves at every corner with offensive persistency, and in the faces of her servants, and all whom she met, she fancied she detected suspicion!

Years of anxiety had elapsed since Saturday night, years of suspense and misery rolled into two days. One more night of restless tossing, and then she would know something at least of her fate! She dared not send for Elizabeth as consoler. Alas! she had cut herself adrift from consolation! Elizabeth was far-seeing, shrewd, observant; she would know at once that something was wrong, and perhaps press for explanations. So in friendless agony the hours passed, the night dragged its weary watches to the dawn, the morning waned into afternoon, and Meresia found herself at the appointed time asking for Dr. Serano.

No sign of the friends he had mentioned. It was as she had foretold.

The servant showed her to José's private study, where he was waiting. His eyes looked heavy, and he held an envelope—large and bulky in his hand, sealed with a huge seal, and addressed.

As the door closed, Meresia sank into the nearest chair, giddy from nervous exhaustion.

José did not speak till she had recovered her composure.

"I hope," he said, "I did not frighten you——"

"Then your hope is far from the mark! I have never spent two days more miserably on earth—they were worse than those first days, for then I hardly realised my position."

"No, but now I want you to realise it fully. You understand that I helped you, not because you desired to be free, but to revenge a community for which I would give my heart's blood. I work in the interest of a wronged and down-trodden people. I do not consider myself, or I should never have let you poison your husband, for in so doing I perjured my soul. I gave that with the rest, and I did not give it lightly, nor without a struggle. But we will not discuss the right or the wrong of it—that's over now, for a season. But one thing I must make clear; I need a service at your hands, and I ask you to do it without comment or discussion!"

"What service?"

"Merely to make yourself my messenger. You see this packet; it must be delivered by hand to the man to whom it is addressed, and the person that delivers it must bring back a reply. It is of vital importance to a great number of people. You are the only person I can trust."

He handed her the large sealed envelope. She looked at the address.

"But this is in Madrid," she said.

"Certainly, and to Madrid you must go. That was what I meant when I told you that you might have to leave England this week. Your visit need only be a short one, and your excuse—a desire to see the home of your dead husband. This helps you in your pose of distressed widow, and I have privately warned your parents to thwart you in nothing."

Meresia flung the packet angrily upon his desk. Her bright green eyes were ablaze now, her lips quivered indignantly.

"So it is for this you have made me suffer, and think myself suspected, lost, for this—servant's work! I am not your messenger, Dr. Serano—to be ordered here and there—and I refuse to go to Madrid. Now, if you have insulted me enough, I should be glad to end our interview."

She moved towards the door.

"Stop! you are in too great a hurry, Mrs. Aladros! You talk of being suspected; you have no fear of being betrayed. You forget that I have the means of forcing you to do my will, you ignore the fact that your rash action has put you in my power—that I hold your life, your honour in my hand. God knows that I am no villain wishing to trade on that power, but I think I desire some service in repayment."

"You talk as if you had nothing to do with my crime."

"Had I? Did you not poison your husband of your own free will? And if I gave you that poison, who would believe your story against mine? I have won for myself a position that men are kind enough to call unimpeachable. Your husband was my friend—my helper. If I say to the world certain actions since my friend's death on the part of his widow have aroused my suspicions so deeply that I must take steps to satisfy myself, do you think the world would prevent me exhuming your husband's body? Then I could show that there was poison in the body, and if you said: 'Yes, but Dr. Serano gave it me,' you would acknowledge the crime. I think, too, that a jury would conclude that I, for my part, should have let the dead lie, had the poison been procured by me. But these are gruesome subjects to discuss, and I neither wish to alarm or annoy you. I would much rather you did my bidding quietly and reasonably; it will save an infinity of trouble."

The bald facts he had revealed, and his immovable face, cowed Meresia! Her woman's heart failed; she took back the packet nervously, turning it over and over in her fingers, and trembling as she stood.

"When must I go?" she asked.

"As soon as possible, say, in three or four days; I will make everything easy for you. I can provide you with a courier who is thoroughly trustworthy, but I dare not let him take these papers, for fear he should lose them, or leave them about to be stolen."

Meresia held the envelope away from her, and looked at it with overwhelming fear, and an awful apprehension.

"Is it some conspiracy?" she whispered. "Will it do harm or good?"

"From my point of view, it must do good," replied Serano. "But don't, please, ask questions. It is so much better for yourself not to know. Be assured you are not

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personally, running any risk; your ignorance is your protection! The papers inclosed are written in Spanish—you would not understand them."

"So I am not allowed a point of view," she replied. "You are treating me very unfairly, very cruelly, and I am sorry to have fallen into your net—sorry to be your tool. I am going against my will, because the man is naturally stronger, and a woman cannot fight, unfortunately, such odds alone!"

"You might have paid a worse penalty for your crime," he said. "I did for you what no other living man would have done. I explained away the causes of death satisfactorily, I avoided an inquest. You might have procured the poison elsewhere, but not the doctor!"

She felt the truth of his words, but she was too angry and sore to acknowledge them, for she hated this mysterious mission; this working in the dark like a mere machine, guided by José Serano.

He offered her his hand, but she refused it, and left him in silence, with the envelope hidden under a light cape of some flimsy material.

Out in the London streets the town birds were playing at spring, but it was a poor imitation after country fare! Flowers cut and quickly fading, bloomed in the dust from dirty baskets, and were sold by grimy fingers. Their gaudy coloured counterfeits glared from the shop windows, and reared brazen heads in the hats and bonnets of passing women-kind, while the sun filtered through the smoke and showed the dirt on everything.

José watched Meresia drive away, then turned from the open window and rested his forehead in his hands.

"I've cowed a woman with threats," he said, "wretch that I am!" Then he reflected, and added with conviction: "For the sake of the injured I destroyed my soul; for the sake of the downtrodden she must work and obey. It is the inevitable law of balance, and Meresia Aladros cannot be spared!"

Mistaken or not, José Serano was at least in earnest, and for this, much shall hereafter be forgiven.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Storm and Stress.

Herbert Brockbank found Meresia in, alone. It was Wednesday afternoon. She welcomed his presence gladly, for solitude only deepened and aggravated her depression and resentment against José.

Half unconsciously, the knowledge that this stranger, who had so suddenly become a friend, cared for her—more than the care of passing admiration and the love of the eyes—dawned on the woman. It thrilled her with a new and maddening terror; it was a phase she had not bargained for when she murdered Aladros.

Love she had put aside as a thing apart from her life, but now the inevitable yearnings of her youth for sympathy and companionship rose to wage war with the bitterness that held sway. How could she ever give or receive affection from another man when the past, with its errors, its bloodshed, followed her on—on—and condemned her!

"Did you go to Serano's yesterday?" he asked.

"Yes." Her lips contracted slightly as she answered him.

"Who was there?"

She hesitated, then replied boldly: "No one, the party was a fraud. He wished to see me about another matter, something of importance."

The mind naturally turns to the worst conclusion, and Herbert Brockbank thought at once that the subject of importance which Serano needed to discuss alone with Mrs. Aladros was one of a sentimental nature. Had not José tried to put him off with sneering words and vague warnings—a ruse to clear his own path?

Meresia noticed his vexation, but little guessed the cause. Their talk grew stilted, meaningless, and a gloom fell on both.

"Are you staying in London or returning to the country?" he asked in a desultory sort of way.

"Neither; I am going to Spain."

"To Spain!" he ejaculated, and his fears deepened. Undoubtedly it was as he suspected.

"Only for a flying visit—a whim," she assured him with forced smiles. "I have a desire to see my husband's home in Madrid. It is the outcome of a restless spirit, and Dr. Serano advises, in fact, orders me to go."

"Ah! then you paid him a professional visit; it was on the subject of your health he wished to see you?"

Meresia hesitated to frame the untruth in words, so compromised, after the fashion of the world, by nodding assent.

Herbert Brockbank breathed more freely, but his jealousy now rankled against the dead husband to whose home Meresia was about to journey.

"I suppose you have always had a passionate longing to see Spain?" he queried.

"No," Meresia answered; and there was something fierce, something stifled in her tone. "I am obliged to go on business."

"But you said just now——"

"Oh! yes—yes; I say many things when I talk that I don't quite mean; I say them without thinking; it is a habit I suppose. I felt it might be pleasanter to pretend I was going for pleasure; but somehow, though I have only known you a few days, you make it difficult for me to pretend."

"That is one of the kindest things you could have said," he answered. "But can no one else attend to your affairs in Madrid, and save you unnecessary trouble?"

She shook her head.

"Trouble is always necessary, or we should never take it," she said. "It forces itself upon us, or is forced by other people. If we are strong we may master the enemy, if we are weak we fall, and obey these tiresome orders of fate and circumstance. I am one of the weaklings, so I consent to be driven, and by a tight rein. But you will think I am talking nonsense—at random—you will laugh at me!"

"On the contrary, I would give worlds to help you."

He spoke with the whole energy of his nature, aspiring to an unreserved intimacy, and waiting for Meresia to answer in the breathless expectancy of intense enthusiasm.

But the secret weight of her hidden cares oppressed Mrs. Aladros and deadened her faculties, while every spring of action relaxed. She leant back in her chair feeling limp and nerveless, while the load on her heart pressed even heavier than before.

If she could have taken this man into her confidence and told him all; if she could have trusted anyone with her fearful secret, the burden might have been lightened. But she could neither ask advice nor seek comfort, and the vision of the dreaded journey came back with tantalising clearness before her eyes. Again she felt insulted, ill-used, trapped by the Spanish doctor.

"You are very good," she said simply, with a little gesture of her hand towards Herbert Brockbank. "But you cannot help me. Believe me when I tell you that I am a most miserable woman, but no one on earth can release me from my misery. So far I have confided to you, in owning that, more than I've told my nearest or my dearest. For the rest of my life I must walk alone, and suffer in silence."

Her head bent low, so that he could not see her eyes. The picture of her grief gave him courage—he drew nearer.

"Why alone? And must you suffer—always."

"Yes, always."

"Then let me share your sufferings—give me at least some part in it—some place."

Her eyes were still downcast, for the passion in his voice shook her control. She tried to answer calmly.

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"But, as a rule, people are not so anxious to suffer."

"I love you," he said slowly, "is that not reason enough?"

Meresia turned cold, for the isolation of her life confronted her. What would his love change to if the mask could be laid aside, and her thoughts revealed? If he could know her sin, would he still say: "I love you!" would that still be reason enough?

A morbid insensibility crept over Meresia, momentarily calming the sharp pain produced by his words. It was an unnatural state of mind—this sudden halting of emotion—a violence on its powers and energies!

"I am fettered—hemmed in," she said at last. "I can give no love and take no love."

Her words sounded hard and feelingless; to the man they came as a blow, though he had half expected them.

"Forgive me," he said; "I ought not to have spoken yet. I said what I thought aloud, hardly realising you would hear and answer me. I could not help myself. Perhaps some day—when time has made the way easier, when you can forget the sorrows, the losses of the past—you will listen to me again—you will let me repeat what I ought not to have said to-day."

Meresia saved herself with an effort from acting on the impulse of the moment, and deliberated. The situation required a caution and reserve to which she had never before been called.

She looked up at him with infinite tenderness in her eyes, and, as he returned the glance, she felt that this—this alone—was the real, the great tragedy of her life.

All she had endured since the death of her husband could not compare to this sudden finding and losing of joy. The warm glow of new sentiments, new anticipations, and then the cold formality of her forced reply:

"There is nothing to forgive, but now or in ten years' time it will be the same. There can be no happy end for me. I have lived in vain. I have missed the mark. If I suffer, you cannot share my suffering. Women, you know"—turning away with a little catch in her voice—"have a special gift for enduring pain."

"What is it that stands between us? Only tell me, only trust me, and I will break it down. Meresia, dear, if I thought you could ever care, nothing should bar the way. Can't you see I'm desperate? Have you ever tried to limit love, to measure it's breadth and depth? For the sake of love, suffering itself is welcome; through good or evil, love, the real, the true, will stand! Only test mine, give it a trial; that is so little to ask, after all. I will go away to wait in silence. I will do anything you tell me for a word of hope."

Meresia shrank from his pleading with a kind of terror. She thought of herself as a creature depraved, shunned alike by men and women. Her conscience rose up to convict her. "This is your penalty," it said, and seemed to take the voices of powerful and malignant spirits, which whispered of punishment here and hereafter.

"Oh! no, no, no," she gasped, half addressing herself to the man, half warding away the unseen tormentors of her tortured brain. "I cannot listen, I cannot hope, I cannot tell, it is all mystery and misery. Don't let me blight your life," rising, and taking Herbert Brockbank's hand in her trembling ones. "I've done enough harm without that. You must not see me again, you must not indeed."

He held the hands she gave him long and fervently, looking into her eyes, and marvelling at the sweetness, and the beauty, of her pale, passionate face.

What could it mean but that she loved him, those tear-stained lashes and trembling lips? But she was overwrought, and some exaggerated care made a difficulty which the man was determined to conquer.

Now he saw she was weak and overwrought, so he left her obediently, with a few soft words that lingered long in her mind, and made the parting harder for Meresia.

She felt at last that she was capable of passionate and all-absorbing love, a love self-sacrificing and devoted. But a strong sense of honour and duty towards the man who had brought this feeling into existence made her determine to crush it, and see him no more.

For a while she sat motionless, wondering what would happen next. This new complication was so unexpected that Meresia felt prepared for anything. That her heart should have gone out with a sudden wild yearning—to Herbert Brockbank of all men—a mere passer-by upon life's stream—a ship sighted in the night—amazed her. But the harbour must be left, forgotten, and the rough seas faced; the waves that would toss and beat till the end of her little span, only to waft her on into the deeper waters of eternity.

The light was fading, and a servant came in with a lamp.

"If you please, ma'am, there is a man downstairs asking to see you."

"What sort of a man? Who is he?"

"A servant of Dr. Serano's, I fancy, ma'am. He said something about an accident."

Meresia waited to hear no more. She flew quickly out of the room and down the stairs.

"Where is he?" she asked, but before the answer came Mrs. Aladros had reached the hall, where a man in livery was waiting.

"If you please, madam," he said, "will you come at once to Dr. Serano? He has been thrown from his carriage—the horses ran away down Piccadilly, and the master is badly, we fear fatally injured. There are two doctors with him, and one of them sent me here to say he had asked to see you."

Meresia listened with a certain apathy to the words—hardly comprehending them, and yet it seemed that some intuition had told her of this before, as she sat alone after her lover's departure. She experienced no surprise, no shock; it seemed a natural event, instead of a startling calamity.

"Bring me a hat and cloak quickly," she said to the maid, and, turning to the man, "call a hansom, please."

"There is one waiting," he replied.

A moment later she was driving at great speed through the London streets. The lamps, which were just being lit, danced before her eyes, and the rush and roar of many waters sounded in her ears. She fancied herself flying through space—now rising, now falling—and her thoughts jumbled themselves into a hopeless tangle.

José ill? José dying? José, the strong—the all powerful? Impossible! This was some trick of Fate—a mockery; it could not mean that he had really sunk to the level of the sick!—the broken!—the stricken of God!

The driver pulled up sharply, and Meresia, waking with a start from her dream, sprang on to the pavement, and ran up the steps of Dr. Serano's house.

(To be concluded.)

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS.

That the new serial in *The Sunday Reader*—"In Cæsar's Name"—is one of the finest stories ever written.
That it is crammed with incident and interest.
That it will be enjoyed by young and old.
That the first instalment is published this week.
That you can commence reading right away.
That you must purchase your *Sunday Reader at once.*
That unless you do this you will be too late, for the number will go rapidly out of print.
That every person in the Kingdom, and especially friends of *S.S.*, should read this entrancing serial, "In Cæsar's Name," now appearing in *The Sunday Reader.*

NOW READY | **THE SUNDAY READER.** | **ONE PENNY.**

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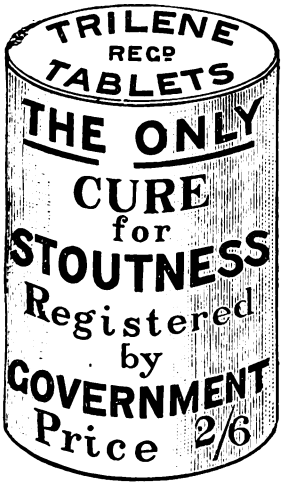
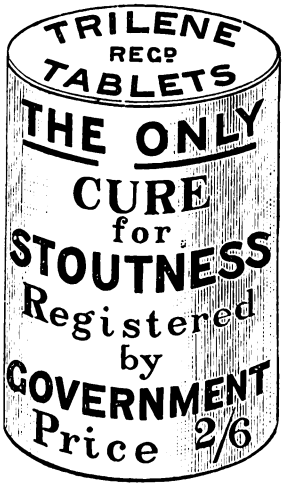


For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.

"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

MISS WELLS, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

MISS DUGGLEBY, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

MISS C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

MISS MACPHERSON, Balmagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontychin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

MARIAN TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

MISS GILLESPIE, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

THE new serial story of which I spoke last week begins in this number. It is without doubt the most powerful naval war story that has ever appeared in any publication. In order to stimulate interest in this, the first instalment, I offer a volume of "THE FINAL WAR" to each of the ten readers who point out by Monday, February 7th (in envelopes marked "Empress") the greatest number of discrepances between the text and the illustrations. Tell your friends about this magnificent story, "The Empress of the Earth."

THE guinea offered in the recent asterisk competition has been won by Mr. R. Plowman, 1, Walcot Square, Kennington, S.E., whose attempt was the first to hand with only two mistakes. Here is the key: 1, Aberdeen; 2, Braunton; 3, Cliffon; 4, Dalmeny; 5, Lancaster.

H. G. asks: "Which two public men have been most alike physically?" ———Probably no two men of modern times are more alike than Mr. Alma Tadema, the well-known artist, and the late Mr. George du Maurier, author of *Trilby*. These two gentlemen so exactly resembled one another that even their dearest and nearest friends were sometimes deceived.

A. C.—No, London is *not* the most cosmopolitan city in the world. This reputation is enjoyed by San Francisco, where the holidays of almost every nation are commemorated by public parades. Every civilised language may be heard, and the ships of every maritime nation, from the British man-of-war to the Maltese felucca and the Chinese junk, are seen in the bay.

MOTHER.—Children seldom shed tears before the age of three months, so there is no reason why you should be alarmed.

P. B. W. is very much in love, and would very much like to tell the object of his adoration all about it, and ask her to marry him. Just at present, however, he is unable to say exactly when he will be in a position to marry, and he wants to know whether he would be justified in proposing under the circumstances. ———There is certainly no harm in asking the lady. She can but refuse you, but if she cares for you she will not mind waiting a little. If you wait until you are able to marry before you declare your love, the possibility of losing her altogether is materially increased.

W. K.—Yorkshire has been the site of more battles than any other English county. From the years A.D. 61 to 1644 thirteen battles are recorded as having been fought on the soil of Yorkshire, and there must be several others of which no record has been kept.

E. N.—The largest of all song birds is the lyre bird of Australia. It has two voices—one a loud, shrill call, which can be heard at a great distance, and the other an inward and varied song, which can only be heard at a distance of a few yards.

M. W. wishes to communicate with the Queen, and, like the wise man I have no doubt he is, before doing so, wishes to find out the proper way to set about it.———To begin with, the paper on which letters addressed to Her Majesty are written must not be folded, for no communication which bears evidence of having been creased will ever fall into her hands. The letter should be written on thick, glossy paper, and inclosed in an envelope that fits it properly. All folded letters are opened by the Mistress of the Robes, and as a rule, the contents never get beyond her, or, if the letter is of any importance it would probably be returned to the writer with directions as to how to forward it.

R. E. G.—An excellent way to obtain a good caricature of anyone is to first of all get a likeness of the person you want to draw, on a sheet of thin india-rubber; then put this over a frame, stretching any parts you wish to exaggerate. In this way you will get an exact reproduction of your friend's face as it would be if it were manipulated in the flesh.

INVALID is anxious to know which is the healthiest place in the world to live.———Judging from the death-rates, the little French hamlet of Aumone might well lay claim to the distinction. There are forty inhabitants, of whom twenty-eight are over eighty-five years of age, and three are over a hundred, and there are no graves in the local cemetery.

B. N. wants to know how a wedding-cake came to be such an indispensable part of a marriage feast.———It is a relic of an old Roman custom. At a Roman wedding, the bride was always supposed to prepare at least a part of the feast with her own hands.

T. H. wants to know if pure water is colourless.———According to a learned professor absolutely pure water, when seen in masses of sufficient depth, is blue, and all the varieties of colour seen in lakes and streams arise from the presence in the water of mineral salts of different degrees of solubility and in varying quantities.

S. C. J.—The tallest structure, compared with the size of the builder, is the hill of Termites, or white ants. If the houses of men were proportionately built, the humblest residence would be a mile high.

WE regret to say that the tale which appeared in *Short Stories* on December 25th, and entitled "The Sermon that Never was Preached," was inserted in this paper under a misapprehension. At the time we believed that it was an original contribution, and we paid for it as such. We have since learnt that it is the property of the author, Mr. Allen Clarke (author of "The Knobstick," etc.), and we must apologise for having inserted it without his permission.

J. N.—No, mad people never realise that they are mad. The moment a madman realises that his ideas are delusions he is not really insane.

P. M. asks: "How many members is it necessary should be present in Parliament in order that a Bill may be discussed?"———In which House do you mean, the House of Commons or the House of Lords? In the former forty members must be present or all discussion of a Bill must cease, the House is counted out, and adjournment necessarily follows. On the other hand, a Bill may be considered in the House of Lords if there are only three members on the benches.

A-BRIDE-TO-BE.—The bride's veil is a relic of the "care cloth," a canopy held over the virgin bride by our Saxon forefathers to conceal her embarrassment.

PETER.—Yes, large tobacco firms are certainly coming to the front in advertising, and are showing a tremendous amount of ingenuity in the drawing-up of their notices. I should think Messrs. Ogden would probably come first in this direction. For smartness and originality of ideas they are hard to beat.

ACHING HEAD wants to know how it is that the present generation seems to suffer so much more from headache than did their ancestors.———The reason is simple enough. People depend so much more upon their brains for a living than they used, and overwork in this direction will soon bring on a headache. The consequence is that the patent drug market is flooded with different remedies, amongst the best of which may be mentioned the "Kaputine" and "Daisy" cures. Free samples of these medicines may be had by writing to Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, for the former, and Daisy Ltd., Leeds, for the latter.

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DEER RECTORY,
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Nov. 8th, 1897.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks' incessant neuralgia.

Thirteen years' suffering effectually and speedily relieved by KAPUTINE is the testimony of Rev. T. TAYLOR, VICAR of ST. BREDWARDS, Cornwall.

There is nothing like this wonderful KAPUTINE. Nothing Similar, Nothing as Good.

Sold by all leading Chemists, Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

If any Difficulty, send and enclose stamped envelope to "A.M.," KAPUTINE Ltd., Huddersfield, for free samples, or 12 Stamps for a Packet of 18 doses.

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EASY COMPETITION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

As a reward to those who assist in selling KAPUTINE, we will forward to each sender of the first ten letters opened Feb. 1st, 1898, with the missing letters of the Eight following words correctly filled in, descriptive of the qualities of KAPUTINE, £1 each; to the next ten 5s. each; to the next ten 2s. 6d. each.

K*PU*I*E	A**EEA*LE	P*RF*CT	U*EQ**LL*D
T*N*C	I*IM*T*BL*	NO*PO*SON**S	E**ECT*VE

As a guarantee that the competitor has assisted in selling KAPUTINE for Headache, each competitor must enclose four stamped outside wrappers of KAPUTINE packets. These four wrappers may be easily obtained if you persuade your friends or relations to let you buy one packet each for them, and you can then get the wrappers necessary. Show them our advertisement and you will have no difficulty in getting them to buy a packet of this wonderful remedy for Headache and Neuralgia, or you may get several friends to join at one packet. You have three months to win the prize in.

In addition to the above prizes we will give a crisp **£10 Bank of England Note** to the person sending, on February 1st, 1898, the largest number of outside wrappers bearing part of the medicine stamp. These wrappers you may obtain as suggested above.

Address: "A.M.," Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield. ***List of Winners "Yorkshire Post," February 7th, 1898.***

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During **OUR ANNUAL CLEARANCE SALE** (which is now taking place) we shall give TWO CASH PRIZES of £15 each, and THIRTY PRIZES of 20/- each. Send a Post-card for Sale Price List and full particulars without delay.

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You will honestly save your 5/- in the pound by purchasing now from

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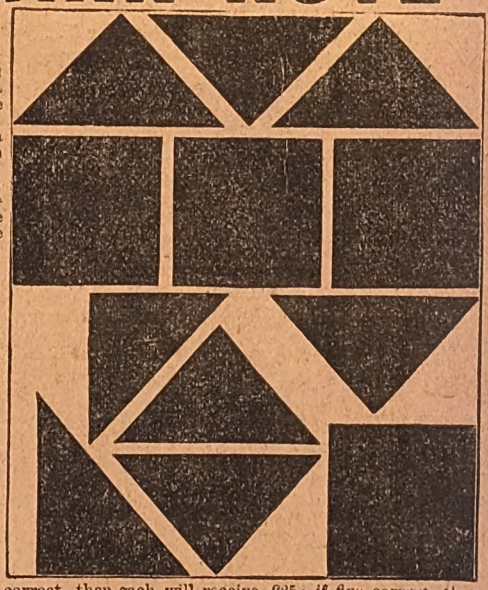
£50 BANK NOTE

GIVEN AWAY to purchasers of ZUILIA the new Indian perfume, solely manufactured by the ZUILIA Perfumery Co., Rosebery Avenue, London, E.C. Put up in artistic bottles packed in wool, in handsome box, 1/3; sent carriage free per return for 1/6. This new and powerful scent is a marvellous discovery, being a blend of odoriferous perfumes, from which emanates a delicious aroma, delicate and pleasing, the generous bouquet pervading the boudoir, and, in fact, the whole household. No home should be without it. With "Zuilia" Perfume we are giving free a 6d. sample box of Zuilia Dentifrice, unsurpassed for the preservation of the teeth.



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£50 will be given gratis to purchasers who succeed in placing together the twelve pieces to form a square.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Cut out the pieces and place together in such a way that the whole will form an ordinary square. When done, paste on cardboard or thick paper (in order to keep the square together), then post the same to us, with a stamped envelope addressed, enclosing P.O. or stamps value 1/6 for "Zuilia" scent.

Nota Bene.—This offer holds good for readers of this paper for the next fourteen days. Should there be more than one person succeed in forming the square, then the £50 will be divided thus: If two correct, then each will receive £25; if five correct, then each will receive £10; if ten, then each will receive £5; and so on. The task set being very difficult, it is anticipated that few will succeed in solving, thus making the remuneration very substantial.

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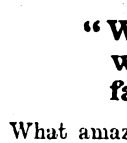
TO AUTHORS, AND ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

"Operating on the mind by means of the body," a secret discovered, we believe, by Camus, is remarked upon by several great writers. DRYDEN, for instance, says:

"When I have a grand design I ever take physic, for when you would have pure swiftness of thought and fiery flights of fancy, you must have a care of the interior."

What amazing "fiery flights" we would have been treated to had DRYDEN been lucky enough to have plied his pen in the days of such an approved medicine as BEECHAM'S PILLS, readers will hardly be able to imagine! LORD BYRON is also lucid when he says:



"The thing that gives me the highest spirits (it seems absurd, but true) is a dose of salts; but one can't take them like champagne."

Surely after this we shall be pardoned for exclaiming, "How BYRON would positively have revelled in his box of BEECHAM'S PILLS!" Other old-time philosophers evidently sailed in the same boat, for we read that

"CARNEADES was accustomed to take copious doses of a GREAT APERIENT as a preparation to refute certain dogmas."

Well, we are certainly bold enough to suggest that, had CARNEADES existed later, his "GREAT APERIENT" would have been none other than BEECHAM'S PILLS, for what medicine has proved itself so eminently worthy of the title? The elder DISRAELI also speaks out on the subject:

"If the mind be disordered, we may often look for its seat in some corporeal derangement. Often are our thoughts disturbed by a strange irritability called the 'fidgets,' a disorder to which the ladies are particularly liable."

DISRAELI was quite right. But with the advent to the world of such known fidget-dispellers as BEECHAM'S PILLS matters have much changed. "Fidgets" notwithstanding are allowed to be all too prevalent to-day, and with both sexes. Perhaps the most innocent kind of fidgets is that peculiar feeling which suddenly seizes some people on discovering they are minus their BEECHAM PILL box, a feeling which of course disappears just as rapidly on the pills' reappearance, for BEECHAM'S PILLS are wonderfully trusty companions. But DISRAELI continues:

"Sometimes our dreams present us with images of our restlessness, till we recollect that the seat of our brain may perhaps lie in our stomach, and that the most artificial logic to make us reasonable may be simply a pill."

DISRAELI again hits the nail on the head. And that this knack of "making us reasonable" in cases of nightmare and lively dreams belongs to BEECHAM'S PILLS, we think goes without saying. Finally, with such practical evidence before us, we feel we must agree with BAYES when he says:

"That for a sonnet to AMANDA, and the like, stewed prunes only might be sufficient, but, for a grand design, nothing less than a more formal and formidable dose."

But BAYES doesn't say of what. We most decidedly say a dose of

BEECHAM'S PILLS

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 476.] For the Week ending February 12th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

YEN HOW, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own.

CHAPTER III.

RUMOURS OF WAR.

As the year wore on, some of the International difficulties centreing round Kiao-Chau, Port Arthur, and Hainan reopened. In England, more than all the old unrest revived.

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What added to this unrest was the fact that some of the items of news were quite inexplicable.

From the beginning of the year it had been known that Germany had not made so brilliant a bargain in the acquisition of Kiao-Chau as she had imagined. The territory placed under her "sovereign rights" had been strictly limited by China, and granted only as a "lease." When Prince Henry of Prussia arrived with the *Deutschland* and the *Gefion*, he found that there were no "laurels" to win, and nobody at whom to strike out with his mailed fist.

What, then, was the surprise of the world, including the Germans themselves, when, in the middle of October, came the news that China had ceded a large additional region to the Kaiser, absolutely without conditions!

There was not a single brain in Europe which could divine the motive of this virtual gift.

At this time, Li Hung Chang, recalled to power by the Emperor at the beginning of the year, was still at the head of affairs in Pekin. But in the short space of a few months he had acquired the habit of taking no step without the suggestion and advice of that new element in Chinese politics, that far-seeing Oriental-European, that much-toiling member of the *Tsung-li-Yamen*, the omniscient Yen How. Already Yen had swung himself up into the position of the virtual ruler of China.

Yen How seemed to Li Hung Chang, haunted as the old statesman had always been by the vision of dismemberment and downfall which overhung China, something like an angel of light. Here was another brain which saw as his had all along seen—only far more clearly, and with powers of invention far vaster than his own to avert the catastrophe.

"Let us be definite," Yen had said, in words which old Li long remembered, one night as they smoked together alone on a moonlit veranda. "Do let us be honest with ourselves, your Excellency! You agree with me that the yellow man is doomed—if the white man is not: in your heart you think it. Then let us say it in definite words; for as soon as ever we have *said* it, we have gone half way toward grappling with our fate."

"Ah, I have said it often and often," answered Li, "but to what good?"

"If you believe that now is the time for action, as I do, your Excellency, you have the matter in your own hand."

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"How so?"

"To me it is clearer than the moonlight there. The facts of the situation seem to stare me in the face."

"Speak, Yen How."

"I will speak, your Excellency. To me it seems that if we could supply a motive to the combined Japanese and Chinese nations to traverse in their millions Asia and the Urals, and then to overrun the Europe of to-day, there is no power on earth that could permanently check the overwhelming momentum of their progress."

"It is nonsense, my son," said Li, with a pull at his long metal pipe.

"Note this," replied Yen—"I only say that I *believe*—for who can be sure? The white man is strong and stern; his frown is dreadful. When he thunders through his throat of iron, who can endure it? I only say that I *believe*—though an army of four hundred millions cannot be mown

There was a brief consultation on board the Majestic.

down in a day, your Excellency. The throats of the Maxims might grow hoarse and burst at this stupendous task. Still, perhaps you are right—perhaps I talk nonsense. I did not seriously mean to propose a march against the Maxim thunder. But I have a thought—a thought. Suppose China and Japan can take away the Maxims *first*, and then march afterwards."

"Speak your meaning, Yen How," said Li; "all is dark to me."

"We wish the white races killed," answered Yen; "well, there are two ways, are there not? We might kill them ourselves—that you say is nonsense. The other way is to get them to kill one another."

At these words Li's pipe came slowly from his mouth, and the outer corners of his eyes screwed up into an expression of the most exquisite enjoyment. He had come into sudden contact with—a New Thought.

"What is left alive of them after their mutual slaughter," Yen How went on, "*we* can kill. Their lands will be weak with loss of blood, their treasuries will be exhausted—there will be no Maxims there any more."

At these last words his own eyes, too, wrinkled up into a net of delicious merriment.

"The trump card is in the hand of China," he said.

How the white races were to be made to destroy one another Li never asked, though the conversation lasted far into the night. He knew well. That, at least, was simple enough.

"England," said Yen as they parted, "England—she is the worst. All the others against *her*."

A few weeks afterwards the cession of large additional territories in China to Germany was rumoured.

And now followed, in rapid succession, a series of the most startling, the most inexplicable reports.

It seemed as if China were not waiting for dismemberment from abroad, but was dismembering herself wilfully, with precipitate frenzy.

First came the intelligence that France had been besought by the Chinese Government to assume the Protectorate, without conditions, of Hainan and Yun-nan.

These few lines of telegram threw Europe into a state of fever. It was decided by everyone that, if the intelligence were true, no earthly consideration of risk would keep the rapacious hand of the Frenchman from grasping at this rich plum.

In a week or so it was definitely known that the news was true, and that France had accepted the offer. Rumours of war filled the air. The world was a-gog, and every spot was an arena for discussion. Only one man was silent—Lord Salisbury. The newspapers besought him to speak, if only a word; but still he remained wrapped in his mantle of taciturnity. A deputation of merchants waited upon the Under-Secretary; but he answered them only with a few strong words of hope.

At this time Yen How's name got into the papers. It was said that this mysterious man, whose dazzling rise in the Celestial Empire was sketched, had recently taken a fresh journey to Tokio. Then a vague telegram, printed in England in small *nonpareil* type, appeared, stating that the probable object of Yen How's renewed journey was to conclude a secret treaty, offensive and defensive, between China and Japan. But the report was unsubstantiated and not believed.

The real bomb was yet to burst into the midst of Europe. It was hurled by the Petersburg correspondent of the *Daily News*.

China had offered to Russia the protectorate of the Yangtse Valley.

It was now, for the first time, that it entered two or three of the shrewdest heads in Europe that China was deliberately seeking to plunge the world into war by working upon the rapacity and selfish greed of the various nations.

One gentleman, a private and unknown citizen, living at a country house in Hampshire, wrote to the *Times* to this effect. But his letter attracted no attention. The few who read it were inclined to regard it as far-fetched.

Yet, looking back now, it seems strange that the same idea did not occur to many others. For it must be remembered that the Yangtse Valley had always been regarded as peculiarly the sphere of British power in China. More than this, toward the early part of the year Britain had governmentally guaranteed the Chinese loan of sixteen millions sterling, and it was agreed that the security for this should consist of the land-tax and the unpledged part of the Customs dues. Now, the chief source of both land-tax and Customs dues was the Yangtse Valley.

Yet the next day the Russian *Novosti* published an evidently-inspired article, stating that on no account would Russia withdraw from the prominent place into which events had forced her in the East.

The feeling in England was one of horror at the blind and criminal cupidity of the Continental nations. The word "War" was on every tongue. Twice in one day there were hurried meetings of the Cabinet. Thousands upon thousands of private letters poured in upon the Foreign Office, urging patience and firmness.

But the hand of Lord Salisbury was forced in an unexpected manner.

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Two items of news followed each other rapidly.

First, that on the 21st day of the 12th moon of the 24th year of Kuang Hsü—that is to say, on the 14th December, 1898—the Yellow Jacket had once more been taken from Li Hung Chang; and that the dominant and extraordinary talents of the man, Yen How, had triumphed over all obstacles, and raised him to the very head of affairs at the Court of Pekin. He had held the golden dish in a long interview before the Brother of the Sun and Moon; he was also the confidant of the Empress.

And the next day a telegram from Sir C. M. Macdonald, the British Minister in China, reached the Foreign Office. This was at once made public.

It stated that China professed herself unable to meet the next accruing interest-instalment on the sixteen millions loan, though the Minister had information from Sir Robert Hart, the Controller of the Imperial Maritime Customs, which led him to doubt the avowal of inability.

Whatever else this might mean, it certainly seemed to mean war. The security for China's default, real or pretended, which was due to England, had already been placed under the control of Russia.

In the House of Commons the Under-Secretary stated that there was still a hope of peace—a hope that "the great Empire of Russia would act with that spirit of fairness and magnanimity in this appalling crisis which alone could prove her worthy of her august traditions." These words were borne at a run by dozens of excited members to interested individuals among the crowd, which surrounded the House from Westminster Bridge round to the Aquarium. London went to sleep with some small degree of quietude that night, Mr. Curzon's reply having been published in an eagerly bought-up 10 o'clock edition.

But the next morning, Mr. Goschen being abroad at an early hour, it was suddenly discovered that, by some extraordinary means, Malta was telegraphically isolated from England, and a hurried telegram was at once despatched from the Admiralty to Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, the Flag-Officer in Commission at Portsmouth.

From the poop of the French vessel rose a wide column of smoke.

CHAPTER IV.

First Blood.

Before eleven o'clock the *Majestic*, the flag-ship of the Channel Squadron, was leaving Portsmouth harbour behind her at the rate of eleven knots an hour. She was under the command of the Senior Officer in Command of the squadron, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Stephenson; and with her went the little gunboat *Halcyon*.

The mystery underlying the sudden journey of this strange couple was not very difficult to be unravelled. The truth was, the Government was greatly startled by the event of the morning. The *Majestic* was, in reality, a convoy to the *Halcyon*; the smaller vessel was acting as a dispatch-boat to Malta; and the battleship was seeing her on her journey till she was deemed to be out of danger molestation.

It had come to that already.

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At the Government offices the words "treachery" and "war" had risen to more than one agitated lip. Europe, it was felt, was drifting, drifting—whither?

The task of the *Halcyon* was to warn the Governor of Malta, and to order the mobilisation of the Mediterranean Fleet near the Straits of Gibraltar. It might be necessary at a few hours' notice to block the entrance of the Mediterranean; it might even be necessary to hurl back a foreign invader from the shores of Britain; and the Channel Squadron was woefully limited in weight of metal.

During the day business in London came practically to a standstill. Wholesale withdrawals of foreign securities were reported from the City. By 3 p.m. it was generally known that a junior military *attaché* to the Embassy at Paris had arrived by private yacht with a sealed despatch from Sir E. J. Monson, and had hurried to the Foreign Office.

The leonine growl of the Gardners.

A day of almost breathless tension reached its climax when, at 9 p.m., Mr. Curzon made the announcement to a full House that peaceful negotiations were still in progress with Russia, but that, late in the afternoon, Germany had made demands of Britain and China with respect to the recently-ceded territories, with which England, as he might say at once, would certainly be unable to comply.

The next morning, before break of day, England found herself telegraphically disconnected with the Continent.

About this precise hour the *Majestic*, having her small companion some half a mile or more away on her starboard quarter, was butting her way, about S.W. by S., through a rough Biscay sea. It was a cold and squally morning, still dark, though a chill hint of day now mingled bleakly with the East. The sea was handling both ships rudely, and the *Majestic's* ponderous lurching through some six or seven degrees brought the heaving green sea washing about the base of her forward barbette, while from the bows of the *Halcyon* it went hissing aft in a continuous cataract of spray.

It was just after five bells in the morning watch, at an hour when the gloomy grey of the morning had lightened a little, that the lookout man on board the *Majestic* reported a big ship steaming leisurely south right upon them about six miles astern. The rate of the *Majestic* was about ten knots, that of the stranger about six; but immediately after coming into sight, a black cloud of redundant smoke pouring from her funnels at once revealed the stranger's intention to improve her pace.

That she had been lurking about with some object of search was clear. That she was now getting up steam seemed to indicate, if anything, that she had found what she was looking for.

In two minutes it was made out that she was *La Gloire*, a French battleship of about the weight and armature of the *Majestic*.

La Gloire's cloud of smoke was premature—it occasioned a suspicion of her motives. The first thing which Sir Henry Stephenson did was to order the *Halcyon* by trumpet-call to steam at full speed S.W. a distance of five miles. The *Halcyon*, at all events, had to be kept out of danger.

Yet he could hardly have expressed his reason for giving this order. Was anyone at war with anyone else? He was ignorant of the fact, if so.

He was not long in doubt. *La Gloire*, even while getting up steam, had pricked off her course four points to starboard. It seemed as if she was about to give chase to the *Halcyon*.

"What! Are we in for a fight then, Captain?" said the Vice-Admiral with a slight smile of surprise, and a puckered brow.

"It almost looks like it, certainly," replied Fleet-Captain Hardy.

"Well, come now, we shall see," said the Vice-Admiral.

By this time *La Gloire* had not only hoisted her colours, but had extra colours on the masts and stays. The *Majestic* wore the ordinary single ensign.

Captain Hardy had ordered steam for full speed. The next moment the *Majestic* swung round to starboard about four points. She was still ahead of *La Gloire*. At her present course and speed she would interpose between the English gunboat and the French ship.

For quite half-an-hour the two ships continued to approach each other slowly and obliquely, having started from a separating interval of about five miles. On this course the sea was more aft, and the rolling and sullen plunging of the ships was less marked.

On board the *Majestic* meanwhile all was bustling action. Decks were cleared, magazines were opened, and ammunition and projectiles got out; water-tight doors were closed. The dawn lightened to a chill and drear twilight.

The real object of *La Gloire* was to intercept and capture any dispatch-boat from the Channel, which might attempt to take intelligence through the Straits, for it had been anticipated that such an attempt would be made. The sending out of the battleship with such an object was, however, a breach of international law and a base stroke of treachery, for no one had declared war with England, though signed declarations of hostilities were already in the *bureaux* of more than one of the ambassadors at London.

That the dispatch-boat should be convoyed, and by a first-class battle-ship like the *Majestic*, was unexpected. *La Gloire* found herself checkmated. There was her prize before her, but between her and it was the thunder and lightning of England.

But though checkmated, she showed no intention of being checked. She kept on her way with rising speed. The two ships, in malign silence, like two red planets rushing to jarring combat, drew nearer. When their speed had increased to thirteen knots, they were about a mile apart. Decks on both were cleared, collision-mats were ready, preparations were made for rigging torpedo-nets in an emergency. Nearer, in awful silence, they drew, two giants with limbs oiled for battle; and the bleak and raw sea-wind of the dawning made hoarse sounds above their funnels.

But one of the ships was still in doubt whether there was

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to be fighting, and, if so, why. There was a brief consultation on board the *Majestic*, and then she signalled:

"Are we combatants?"

There was no reply.

To this silence the *Majestic* sent aloft the answer:

"Trafalgar."

And now the baleful silence recommenced. Both commanders had stationed themselves in their conning-towers.

A furious bombardment of quick-firing guns was opened.

On either ship not a soul was to be made out by the glasses save the crews of the quick-firing guns on the hurricane decks, and of the machine-guns in the tops. By five minutes past seven the fleet-engineer of the *Majestic* announced that he had steam enough to drive the vessel at her utmost trial speed.

The strategy of the French commander in not answering the *Majestic*'s question was soon apparent, for Sir Henry Stephenson felt himself bound to wait for the first shot, being uncertain how matters stood on shore. And the first shot in modern naval warfare must often mean victory.

The two vessels slowly converged, *La Gloire* on the other's starboard side, steering S.W.; the *Majestic* on the other's port bow heading S.W. by W. Suddenly *La Gloire* sharply altered her course by several points to the eastward, and impetuously bore down upon the *Majestic*.

"Well," said Sir Henry Stephenson to himself. "That is uncommonly like a declaration of war, if anything can be. Well, then, Mr. Frenchman——"

Immediately the *Majestic*, too, pricked off eastward, her after pair of 67-ton guns being kept trained on the enemy as she manœuvred. The ships were now so well within effective range that the *Majestic*'s thin smoke, blown into a wide hovering fog by the east wind, half concealed her movements from *La Gloire*.

For a time it seemed as if the British ship were in retreat and the French giving chase; then suddenly both ships were hidden from each other's sight. Sir Henry, taking advantage of his windward position, had thrown overboard some twenty casks of smoke-producing tow and naptha and tar, which at once separated the two ships with a blackness of thick red-brown reek, mingled near the water with bickering tongues of flame. The commander of *La Gloire*, fearing that in this fog of fume the *Majestic* might suddenly turn about and ram him, at once changed his course south-west, and was now the retreating ship. But the English admiral had guessed his thought, and when the region of the smoke-making composition was passed, the beam of the *Majestic* was abreast of *La Gloire*'s poop.

It was the lieutenant in charge of the fore-barbette of the *Majestic* who first woke the thunder of this winter morning fight.

Simultaneously, with one awful bang of wrath that shook

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the *Majestic* herself from stem to stern, both the 67-tonners of this barbette went crashing into *La Gloire's* quarters.

At this moment the ships were not half a mile apart. When the smoke cleared it was at once seen that the whole stern armament of *La Gloire* was in ruins, her after-barbette shattered, and the two heavy guns unshipped. One of the shells had penetrated abaft her after armoured tube and there burst, killing fifty men, and rending into a chaos of *débris* all it met. From the poop of the French ship rose a wide column of smoke. At the same time a furious bombardment of quick firing guns was opened from both vessels. In three minutes every unarmoured or unsheltered spot in each ship was cleared of every living thing. Twelve-pounders, six-pounders, three-pounders mingled in swift-cracking uproar, punctuated by the leonine growl of the Gardners, and the more deliberate detonation of the Nordenfeldts. All the air was war, and all the intervening sea a commotion of hissing foam.

But now the machine-guns in the tops were silent. Their protecting shields had been shot away, and their crews annihilated. One of *La Gloire's* funnels was gone, and the other pierced, while three projectiles from her had burst their way through shields of six-inch nickel steel, and put three of the *Majestic's* central battery guns out of action, striking them fairly on the chase. Within three minutes the two ships had belched forth a flaming hail of some twenty-two thousand rounds of shot, riddling all except the most heavily-armoured parts of each other, tearing to shreds all light gun-screens, and turning unarmoured ends and box-batteries into shambles.

Already it seemed improbable that either ship, unless the other were at once destroyed, could come out of this anarchy of thunder, and live.

The starboard side of the *Majestic* was still presented to the port of *La Gloire;* but *La Gloire's* speed had been greatly reduced, owing to injuries to her funnels, and the *Majestic* had forged forward abreast, then somewhat ahead, of the other.

Vice-Admiral Stephenson was every moment awaiting the second crash of his after-barbette into the French ship's beam, when *La Gloire's* two fore-barbette guns sent out their voices simultaneously.

One of the shots glanced against the centre armour-belt of the *Majestic* at the water-line, leapt, struck her fore-armoured tube, and went diving far forward into the sea, where it burst in a high water-lily of spouting foam.

The other wrought terrible havoc. It struck the *Majestic's* central battery at the height of the deck, burst inside, blew away the chief part of the hurricane deck, and turned all the guns in that battery into a mere *débris* of twisted and crumpled metal.

But as the British ship staggered and reeled at this blow, her bluejackets sent up a cheer: for the next instant the after-barbette in their own ship was talking, too; and a few seconds afterwards it was seen that *La Gloire's* forecastle was on fire, that she had gone down by the bows, and that her screws, half out of the water, were furiously revolving in a broad mound of wheeling spume.

Was she sinking, then? The British Vice-Admiral half expected now to see her strike her flag. But even as he looked, he was undeceived.

Yonder, a hundred yards astern, somewhat to his port side, he saw a sight which might have made even the heart of a Nelson leap to his mouth. It was a small object, looking like a cubical box; and even as he glanced at it, it disappeared beneath the waves.

He knew this to be one of the ingenuities from the Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée. It was a submarine boat; and the object which he had seen for a moment was the top of her conning-tower as she rose for an observation of distances and directions.

The submarine boat had been secretly lowered into the water from *La Gloire's* starboard side. Her motor was electric, supplied from storage batteries, and her speed, over at some depth, considerable. Vice-Admiral Stephenson knew that her aim was to pass under his torpedo-nets, carrying an electrically-fired torpedo, to be attached to the bottom of his already half-ruined ship.

At once he went circling at full speed to starboard, crossing the bows of the now slowly-progressive *La Gloire*, one of whose fore-barbette guns was useless, and the other unready to fire.

At the same time he had rapidly lowered from his port side a second-class torpedo boat which he then carried on deck. By means of hot water from the *Majestic's* boilers she was already under steam, and with careful handling, in spite of the parent ship's now headlong wheeling flight, she touched the water in safety, and at once went fretting fussily through the billows, a mere cloud of hurrying spray, on her fateful way, at a speed of fourteen knots. Like some buzzing bee with deadly sting, she drove straight upon *La Gloire*.

The alarm on the French ship at this hastening ruin resembled panic. Disregarding the movements of the *Majestic*, her commander at once put his helm a-port, and turning upon his small foe the comparatively uninjured armament of his starboard side, poured forth, in one continuous roll of artillery, a bombardment of some twelve thousand pounds per minute. *La Gloire* was now, however, well in the trough of the sea, which flowed in bulky swells from east to west: the greater portion of her huge outburst of fire failed to take effect; and still the puffing thing came near and yet nearer, overwhelmed, but steadfast, drowned but headlong, tiny but terrible.

The climax of the fight was near. It had lasted but a few minutes: it had seemed like an eternity.

At about three hundred yards from *La Gloire* the little torpedo-boat launched a Whitehead.

As the oiled and gleaming needle of steel slid swiftly into the water, it passed straight through the body of a great buxom swell, and came instantly out on the other side, making directly for *La Gloire's* quarter; but before it could reach her, the ship manœuvred slightly to starboard, and the projectile slipped hurriedly under her stern, and exploded harmlessly some distance away.

But even as it did so, another torpedo came shooting through the waves from the little boat.

At the same time the crew of the torpedo boat was seen to be wildly leaping at random over her sides into the waves. Seen—but dimly seen—for the whole craft from stern to stem, as well as all that region of the water into which she was now plunging on her last voyage, was enveloped in one hissing white cloud of stinging vapour. Two of her men instantly sank, scalded to death. A twelve-pounder, shot upwards, had burst into her boiler.

It had not come from *La Gloire*. It had come from the unseen thing which was cruising darkly beneath the sea in search of the *Majestic*.

Immediately the submarine boat rose again, and the man in the conning-tower, looking a moment abroad, saw the *Majestic*—or rather he saw a vast mass of smoke which utterly concealed the *Majestic* and the direction of her bow. All he could note was that the great ship was now fearfully and wonderfully near to *La Gloire;* that the huge pillar of cloud was approaching *La Gloire*—rapidly, rapidly—with horrid impetuosity.

He did not hesitate a moment, but, putting his fins into play, instantly sank, and made for a point at which he believed he would intercept the rushing ship.

The mass of smoke which he had seen round the *Majestic* had been intentionally caused by her Commander. The Vice-Admiral had ordered every gun which still worked to be discharged, whether they bore upon the French ship or not, and enveloped in the mantle of ascending reek which poured from the hot weapons, he put his helm hard down, suddenly left the evolutionary curve of sixteen points through which he had been circling, and drove straight upon *La Gloire*. He was going to ram.

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At that awful moment expectation stood in horror. "Prepare to ram!" went forth the command from the conning-tower, and every man on the *Majestic* fell flat on his face, as though the trump of doom had sounded. And now, while the clock might tick, and tick again, the men on *La Gloire* became aware of what was coming. Up out of her envelope of vapour suddenly loomed the *Majestic* upon them, near and huge, like a monster rising from the deep. Just then the remaining fore-barbette gun of *La Gloire* was being discharged, and the ships being nearly bow to bow, the shell went forth with disastrous havoc, shattering the thickly armoured fore-barbette of the *Majestic*, battering the conning-tower, destroying the funnels, and shocking the Vice-Admiral, who was not directly hit, into a state of insensibility.

But even as it did so, the crash came. The ram of the *Majestic* touched *La Gloire* on her starboard bow, glanced a little, then with a horrid "z-z-zip-p," "z-z-zip-p," then with a bursting and rending uproar like the cracking asunder of an arsenal, went tearing and smashing a shapeless hole 20ft. in length along her beam. The sea poured into the doomed ship; and at once she lurched bow-ward to starboard.

But the ram of the *Majestic* was not yet clear of *La Gloire* when the most stupendous hubbub of the whole battle, drowning every other sound, rent the heavens. It was a double detonation, yet the two reports followed so closely one upon the other, that they seemed almost like one.

They were the sounds of two torpedoes.

The 28,000 tons of the two great ships half-leapt from the water, and jumped with a start apart, shivering to their keels; and two immense pillars of white cloud, which soon were one, rose high above them, shutting them from each other.

One of these two torpedoes had been affixed by the crew of the submarine boat beneath the bow of *La Gloire*, which they had mistaken for the *Majestic*; the other was the second of the two which had been despatched from the *Majestic's* torpedo boat before she had sunk. It had caught on to the keel of *La Gloire* sternwards, and its explosion had been delayed, perhaps half-a-minute, till now.

When the smoke cleared a little, the commander of *La Gloire* was seen, with blood-soaked clothes, and haggard face, and eyes staring with horror, standing on the wreck of his after-barbette, and frantically hauling down his colours. He sent forth to the wreck which he had made of the *Majestic* this cry of terror—

"*Au nom de Dieu!*—we are sinking!—*for God's sake. . . .*"

The captain of the *Majestic* at once lowered the only boat on his deck which was at all capable of floating, though half of even her port-side, too, was smashed away. The whole crew of the British vessel had hurried to deck, ready, even as they cheered in victory, to aid in the work of rescue.

But as the boat pushed off, men were seen leaping hurriedly from *La Gloire*, in a vain attempt to escape her suction as she went down. She gave them little time. The bursting of the two torpedoes fore and aft had simply turned her into a mass of disconnected *débris*. She lurched a little aft—up went her bows like two hands laid together in prayer—then her whole length settled evenly lower; she lurched aft again, obliquely, clumsily; then, as if with sudden resolve, she skipped forward, dived her nose briskly into the sea, and disappeared.

Three of her crew of six hundred were saved.

Meantime, the captain of the *Majestic* was signalling to the *Halcyon*, waiting, eager for fight, five miles away:

"We are sinking—make haste."

The great ship was settling slowly down by the bows; for the torpedo which had burst beneath the bows of *La Gloire* had wrought great havoc upon the other's forward bottom also; nor could the pumps produce much impression upon the inrushing waters.

The *Halcyon* succeeded in taking off the hundred and fifty-two that were left of the brave crew, taking also on board the crew of the French submarine boat, who had escaped injury. They hardly stopped to watch the *Majestic* settle slowly down before the gunboat's bows were once more turned, to bear her momentous message, toward the Straits.

But if Dr. Yen How had been there to see that battle of the giants, and its result, the corners of his eyes would have wrinkled up into a very web of tickled merriment

(To be continued.)

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DO THE DEAD COME BACK?

MANY times during the last few months I have taken up my pen to give to the world the story of Geza Domenico, but always, after having written several pages entirely satisfactory to myself, I have felt the restraining touch of an invisible hand upon my own, and have laid my work aside.

But now that I know he is dead, the impulse to write has come strongly upon me, and I feel that it can be written.

The family of Domenico is one of the oldest and most aristocratic in Italy. It has been for generations one of the greatest refinement, has never been connected with scandals at court, and has always lent the influence of its wealth and great name to the music and art and literature of the time.

Geza first saw the light of day in Florence,
Where the quiet Arno flows;

and up to his twelfth year breathed in the atmosphere of his romantic surroundings, the poetry and dreamy romances of that most beautiful of all Italian cities. Then through some fancied intrigue of his father, the elder Domenico was banished from Italy. Crossing with his family into Austria-Hungary, he located after several years in Buda-Pesth, that centre whence so many musical geniuses flash upon the world, weaving into their Hungarian melodies all the wild dreamings of love and battle and death, which we find threading so much of the Hungarian composition.

Here Geza, with every opportunity wealth could afford, perfected himself in his studies on the violin, and in his twenty-first year produced his opera, *The King and the Subject*, scoring an instantaneous success. The score was of the highest order, and produced a profound sensation in the Hungarian capital. Not so, however, the libretto, which I had the misfortune to write. Innocent enough in itself, in its allusion to the rulers of the country, the artists reading more deeply between the lines than even I had dreamt, and adding to the sentiment the buffoonery of the stage, the libretto, when it reached the court, was as unpopular as the music was acceptable.

The mandate issued from Vienna, and Geza was compelled to quit the country. I, being an Englishman, was treated less cavalierly; but in various ways, which one even less observant than myself could not fail to note, I was led to believe my continued residence in Buda-Pesth, or indeed in any part of Austria-Hungary, would be greatly detrimental to my health.

Geza realised enough from the sale of his score to organise an orchestra, which he took across the Atlantic for an American tour.

Either because New York had been favoured that season with several imported orchestras or because of incompetent management, Geza's venture proved a dismal failure. It certainly was not because of any lack of artistic ability.

Too proud to write home for assistance, crowded to the wall by local musicians who were jealous of his superior ability, unable to speak fluently the language of the country, Domenico, in a moment of folly and desperation, enlisted in Uncle Sam's army and was sent to join a regiment stationed at Fort McKenny, in Wyoming, in the heart of the Wolf Tongue Range of the Big Horn Mountains.

Several years afterwards chance sent me to Wyoming, and at McKinney we renewed our friendship of former years. Here, at least, where Geza was as much out of place as an arpeggio in a dirge, there was no danger of punishment for any shortcomings in the wording of librettos, or the manner in which they are produced.

Every evening after mounting guard I used to sit in Domenico's room in the musician's barracks, and listen to his music by the hour. Often he improvised, but more frequently he played with his score before him, and forgot his surroundings until weariness would recall him to himself.

To me, with only a rudimentary knowledge of written music, his books were only a hieroglyphic maze of bars and dashes, but to Geza they were the Open Sesame which threw wide the gates of Paradise.

Many months passed with these evenings of delight, and I grew to love the man as I loved his music. Later I began to notice that he absented himself more and more in trips to the little town of Buffalo, some four miles from the post, at that time, like the majority of frontier towns, peopled with a rough but generous class.

Of the women who had drifted into the locality little need be said. Among them, however, was one more attractive than the rest, musical, and an appreciative listener. Geza, not understanding the degradation of the life into which choice or circumstance had led her, lost his heart to her.

Not until it was too late did the terrible and shameful truth flash upon him. When he came home that night I knew. He picked up the violin and listlessly drew the bow across the strings, then laid it aside wearily; but he told me nothing.

I left him alone with his grief, waiting till he should come for me. Several days later he was reported missing from the post. He was not in the town, and after forty-eight hours I started out alone to seek some trace of him.

Clear Creek Canyon is one of the most beautiful in all Wyoming. The creek lashes itself to foam over its rocky bed; on either side the tree-clad mountains rise to a great height, and in the far background the snow-clad peaks lift themselves into the impenetrable deep of the sky. To the mere plodder a mountain torrent is a thing of danger, venting its anger in incessant roaring; but to the artist, the musician, and the poet, it is at once a delight and an inspiration.

The artist, in the mad swirl of the waters, sees such graceful curvings in infinite variety as he can find nowhere else; the musician finds there the orchestra of Nature forever voicing its "To Salutiamo" to the infinite; for the poet it is the siren wooing him with the seductive sweetness of her voice, pitched at times to some ruder note, as though she sought jealously to drown the whisperings of the leaves. Knowing

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Domenico as I did, I felt certain that somewhere here I should find trace of him, and I was not far wrong.

After riding nearly the entire day along the winding and sometimes dangerous trail, at last I reached a comparatively level spot where the waters flowed quietly for a space.

My horse, affrighted at something I could not see, snorted suddenly, reared, turned, and started to run down the cañon.

No amount of coaxing, nor even a vigorous application of the spurs could induce him to return. Slipping the reins over his head so that he might graze along the trail, I shouldered my rifle and proceeded on foot.

Tremulously, as the faint stirring of the leaves when the day begins to make itself felt, there came floating to me the tones of Geza's violin. Strange that I should have happened upon him at such a moment. I recognised the piece that he was about to play; it was the prelude of the second act of his opera, and entitled the "Awakening of Love." One who has witnessed a dawn in the tropics, when a thousand songsters were piping their matin lays, might form a fair conception of the riotous irresponsibility and joyousness of the music that came drifting towards me across the open. At Buda-Pesth, on the occasion of its initial production, the audience rose *en masse* and called for the composer. Again and again was Geza compelled to bow his acknowledgements, and finally, leaving the orchestra, he rendered the obbligato from the stage.

A peculiar feature of the composition was the impression it conveyed of absolute purity. Resting under its spell, the mind became calm and serene and clear as the depths of a mountain spring.

A short distance up the cañon I saw Geza standing by a large boulder, and near him, to my amazement and horror, a huge mountain lion was dancing and playing with all the abandon and agileness of a kitten.

Thrilled as I was by the music, I realised his dangerous position. Following the overture, he played the part which formed the climax of the second act, "Amor Trionfale." It rang forth with all the strength and vigour of the "Hallelujah" chorus. Then it seemed that a miracle was being worked. A black cloud fell across the sun and the cañon was in heavy shadow. A feeling of intense dread crept over me; the lion, whining, thrust his head between his fore paws and lay there quivering. Through the quiet of the cañon stole the measure of a "Miserere," the equal of which has never been produced. Low over his violin Geza was bending, throwing all the sadness of his soul into those quivering chords, while unconsciously my lips framed the words:

In death's dark hour remain thou near.

Again the theme failed, and I felt it was the denunciation.

I could hear him cursing fate or what you will with all the depths of his nature. The setting sun had slipped round until it shone squarely into the cañon, purpling the leaves of the trees and the grasses, while against the Eastern sky the snow mountains rose like pillars of fire.

I felt the mad blood rushing to my head, and through me crept the desire for retaliation on an untoward fate, which must have animated Geza as he played. Then suddenly the lion broke the spell.

Loud and terrifying, but resonant as a huge bass viol, the roar of the brute woke the echoes of the forest, and sounded in perfect unison with the shriller fury of the violin. The lion's jaws were open, his tail was lashing furiously from side to side, and he began crouching ready for a spring. Then I raised my rifle and sent a bullet through his heart. He was in the air when the bullet struck him.

His huge jaws knocked the violin from Geza's grasp, and the dead body falling upon it crushed it completely. Then I approached Geza, and he started at the sight of me. He did not realise the danger he had escaped. The loss of the violin was a great grief to him.

It was a valued Guarnerius, which had been in his family for generations, and had been his constant companion since childhood.

He picked up the scattered fragments and wrapped them up tenderly. I secured the skin of the lion, and finding my horse, Geza mounted him, and together we returned to the post. Geza lay in the hospital with a fever for several weeks, and shortly after his recovery his troop was ordered to another post, and except in memory he passed completely out of my life. A soldier taxidermist prepared the skin for me and applied a preservative to the head by which it retained its natural appearance.

This was fifteen years ago.

* * * * *

Last evening at home I answered a ring at the door. A figure dressed in black, and but dimly discernible in the gloom outside, handed me a roll of paper tied with a black ribbon, and ere I could ask any question disappeared into the night.

I returned to the drawing-room where my wife was sitting at the piano, and opened the roll curiously. It was an arrangement for the piano, dedicated to me and composed by Geza Domenico.

My wife looked it over for a few minutes and then began playing, slowly at first, and then more and more interestedly. It was the music of Clear Creek Cañon, softened and subdued.

Gradually, as it developed, however, I felt the old sensations creeping over me, and then beautifully sweet and clear rose the notes of the violin blending with the piano in a composition of exquisite harmony. How can I adequately describe the return of the old emotions as the piece progressed? The hot blood surged to my temples as before, and then to my utter horror the lion skin on the hearth gradually assumed the shape it held in life, the tail lashed madly from side to side, and the jaws were red with blood. Then there was a blood-curdling growl, a crash of broken strings, and all was silence.

After a time, which seemed very long to me, I bent to touch the lion skin, and it fell to pieces in my grasp, and as I lifted the head, which had fallen entirely flat, there was underneath it only a handful of ashes on the hearth.

You, who never rested under the spell of Domenico's music, may say that I was imaginative, or under the influence of a self-induced hypnotic condition; but I, I know that Geza Domenico, intangible and invisible, stood in the room last night, compelling through the perfection of his art, a perfect interpretation of the score and joinings with his violin in a production of incomparable beauty.

And through my life long I shall carry the conviction that with the brute creation there is a to-morrow of death, and that an all-wise and beneficent God doth in his own good time guide even these

By ways we cannot comprehend
To some unguessed, benignant end.

HOWARD HURLBUTT.

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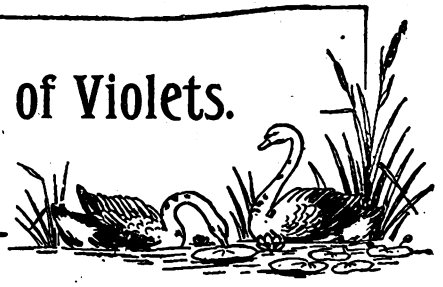
A Bunch of Violets.



THERE was tender allurement in the soft spring air, as if nature were capriciously avoiding a definite understanding with the conquered, retreating winter. In the park the tops of the trees showed delicately green, the young foliage sending its subtle, pervasive fragrance over the neighbouring streets. The gardeners had long since begun to set out the primly marked beds of scarlet geraniums and shrubs, and the rich soil, harrowed up in readiness in dark discolorations over the lawn, emitted a pungent, pleasant odour. It was one of those days which depressed one within doors. Escherling had been confined to his office since morning, and his ears throbbed with the din of the noises of the city and the cries of the newsboys. He left the building somewhat uncertain as to his destination, but he finally decided to go to the park.

On his way down to the corner he passed his old florist's shop, the windows a glorious mass of red roses and early Parma voilets. It seemed natural to Escherling to-day to enter, as he had not done for nearly a year, and order the inevitable violets, having but one desire to possess them. He could promptly have furnished a certain address for them to be sent, as he had done the last time that he had been here, but as the clerk paused expectantly with pencil in hand for his orders there rushed bitterly over him the depth of the wide abyss between him and the one who unconsciously filled his very thoughts. A sudden decision struck him—since Elenore Moyne was yet out of town, what prevented him from sending them to her, just as he used to do? She would never be the wiser as to the donor, and to him there seemed an indefinable tender bond between them by these flowers. He gave the number with a voice which faltered, and detaching a few for his coat, hastily left the shop with a boyish feeling of elation he could not yet define.

As he aimlessly made his way across the park, his feet sank deep into the young velvet grass. The violet sellers were crying shrilly their wares everywhere. The air was loud with the birds' vespers and twitterings. Great golden flies glittered in the white sunlight, and two crimson ladybirds coolly paraded his arm.

To his left some children were trying to fly a kite, the white capped nurse looking on with approval. Life had aroused itself. Escherling felt it coursing rapidly through his veins, and he began to take a dignified interest in the success of the childish amusement.

The light folds of a woman's gown arrested his attention under some trees, and he was absently thinking what a pretty spring picture she made, and tried to recall some appropriate lines of Swinburne's to that effect. She suddenly turned her head as if at his mental inquiry, and he forgot about the quotation as he walked to her.

"Fortune favours me to-day." He held out his hand to her as he spoke. "I have met you, and a spider crawled all over my face. Is it an omen of the summer time?" She had flushed a tender pink at his approach, but he had not noticed it.

"I do not know," she said in a pretty voice of soft intonations. "Elenore Moyne is at home again."

Escherling felt the colour recede swiftly from his face. He dropped her hand with a gesture of annoyance. Besides, there were those flowers, the former favourite of both. He had too much pride to force any attempt at reconciliation on her, especially since she had taken the initiative in coldly sundering all between them. And he had never known why, for he could not beg for an explanation from her.

"Surely I may plead other interests than engrossment in Miss Moyne's actions?" he replied with vexation, joining step with her towards the pond. Escherling failed to see the shy, sweet glance the girl at his side gave him. He was endeavouring to meet her light talk and conversational tittle-tattle half way, but his levity sat heavily on him. His entire being surged recklessly with the old feelings which Elenore's very name summoned to life. The birds seemed to chirp it from the boughs above, and it seemed to be murmured in the ripple of the water. A covey of white swans sailed gracefully along by their side, and they paused to watch the gyrations of an ugly duckling deserted and avoided by his more favoured companions. In sudden pity Escherling singled it out for his favour and fed it somewhat extravagantly on divers unhealthful but eagerly devoured foods.

There sounded the staccato beat of horses' hoofs on the hard road near them, and he turned indifferently at their approach. He had only a dim recollection afterwards of a girl's pale, aristocratic face, two cold, scornful eyes on him, and not the slightest recognition from her as he fastened his burning gaze on her, and the Moyne carriage had whirled by. He felt strangely sick at heart and depressed, and tried to believe that she had not really seen him. Perhaps she did not know that he had returned from his trip abroad during her absence, but common-sense dissipated all such idle thoughts, and he was forced by his own conclusion to acknowledge that his hopes were not realisable.

A certain fatigue had asserted itself, and with his companion he reached the chairs and abstractedly seated himself. One thought permeated his being, and he despised himself that he could still think of one who so evidently manifested her aversion to him. At that

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moment a young fellow passed them whistling "Love's Dream After the Ball," and Escherling told the girl at his side that there were too many hallucinations in regard to the ancient emotion.

"Love is one of the illusions of life," he went on, with a hard little laugh, "for, after all, it is only a sort of apotheosis, endowing some particular one with virtues compatible with her appearance. It is our fault, of course, if we were deceived, and I suppose we should not censure the innocent offender for the deception, but that is not human nature."

She paled a trifle as he spoke, but he did not see it.

"You—you have never loved if you can speak like that," she said tremulously.

Escherling turned hotly towards her, but she went on rapidly before he could speak: "Love is God's blessing on man. It purifies our hearts and minds, and without it we would be as shipwrecked beings fighting for safety. It is ennobling, lifting our meaner nature above until we could give in voluntary renunciation our best beloved—even to another."

"I should like to see the man you would love, Esther," Escherling said, abruptly as she finished. She looked away, with a little catch in her breath, to where the pale green foliage fringed the confines of the park. "But I cannot agree with you—in one thing," he continued, his eyes intent on a familiar vehicle which had stopped to allow two ladies to alight.

His heart beat irregularly as the younger of the two seated herself at a short distance from him, where he could catch occasional ravishing glimpses of her proud profile and the glint of her brown, satiny long hair. He dared not look at it long for he was not sure of his control. It seemed to him that she must hear the restless clamour of his heart and leave, knowing that he was near. His voice trembled in spite of himself when he spoke again.

"Love is selfish." He watched Elenore Moyne as he talked. She had given a start of surprise at the sound of his voice and it did not escape him.

"I know that I could not give up—any one I loved to another," he stopped. "That would not be love, in my opinion, for the feeling is purely selfish, as all happiness is. Let me tell you the mistake a friend of mine made. There is no need to begin a monotonous cant about his personal appearance, his position and such nonsense. He was the average young fellow, of good impulse and heart, and he fell in love. Being of an intense nature, it was a whole-souled affair with him, and I suppose from his own overwhelming passion he doubtless attributed more charms to his beloved than she may have possessed, for he thought that she loved him even as he did her, and that was the illusion. There were certain things involving the honour of some one very dear to him—and, well, nearer to her.

"Some distributing element of humanity went to her with malicious tales about this, telling things really as they did exist, but compromising the innocent one—this—this friend of mine. If he cleared himself, he would inculpate the other participant in the affair, and that would hurt this girl he loved more—so he thought—than to let her believe him guilty, for the other was very near to her, while he was only dear—this was his conceit again. So he refused to explain, and she sent him from her, scorned and dishonoured by her. If she had loved him, she would have had faith in him and accepted his version of the circumstances. It was not her fault, of course, that he was deceived in her. That is where the apotheosis comes in. She never had cared for him, but he made himself believe that she had."

"She did not love him," the girl at his side said decisively. "I do not wish to sit in judgment on another's actions, but to me no affection existed, or she would have believed in him, especially at that time when he needed her faith, and——" she ended abruptly. Escherling was watching Elenore Moyne with a white face, as she agitatedly arose and was urging her companion to depart.

Up through the avenue the carriage was coming towards them, the handsome horses impatiently pawing the earth.

"Violets! Violets!" the flower girls were calling. Then there was a sudden silence, and in that stillness it seemed to Escherling that a silent panorama of the barren years before him stalked noiselessly. There was the anguish of the past twelvemonth to verify it. He would humble his pride and take the one chance for happiness, and if he lost he could not be more desolate to-morrow than yesterday.

"Elenore!"

All of the pent-up anguish of his soul rang out as he gently called her name. She paused irresolutely, her head turned away from him. A blur of Parma violets showed on her bosom, and he felt a dull enjoyment, half malicious, that they were his and she did not know it.

"Elenore!"

He advanced half way to her. The girl with whom he had been talking looked after him with a dumb sorrow in her plaintive eyes. Elenore Moyne turned and met him squarely. Her face was whiter than ever, but a certain hard light had settled over it.

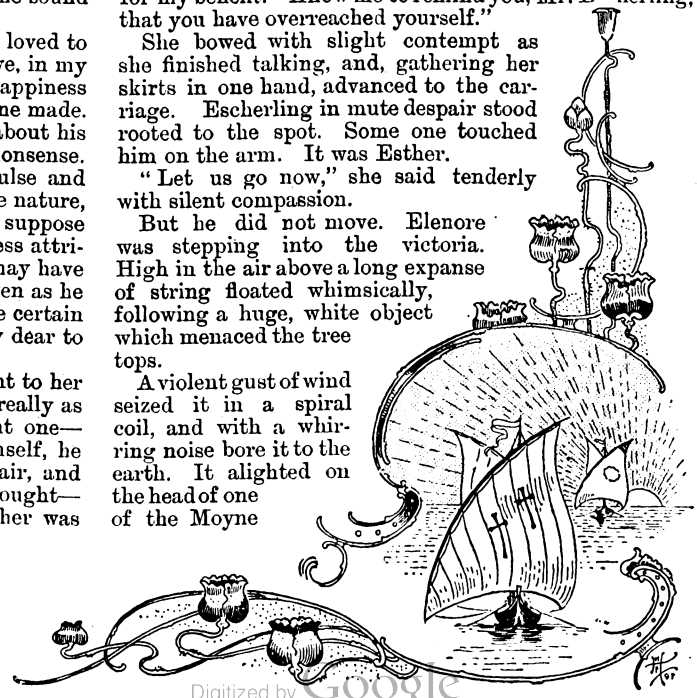
"You failed to tell me what those certain things involving your friend's honour were," she said cuttingly. "I infer that, too, was intentional, as was also this pretty little rustic idyll—a sort of 'As You Like It' for my benefit. Allow me to remind you, Mr. Escherling, that you have overreached yourself."

She bowed with slight contempt as she finished talking, and, gathering her skirts in one hand, advanced to the carriage. Escherling in mute despair stood rooted to the spot. Some one touched him on the arm. It was Esther.

"Let us go now," she said tenderly with silent compassion.

But he did not move. Elenore was stepping into the victoria. High in the air above a long expanse of string floated whimsically, following a huge, white object which menaced the tree tops.

A violent gust of wind seized it in a spiral coil, and with a whirring noise bore it to the earth. It alighted on the head of one of the Moyne



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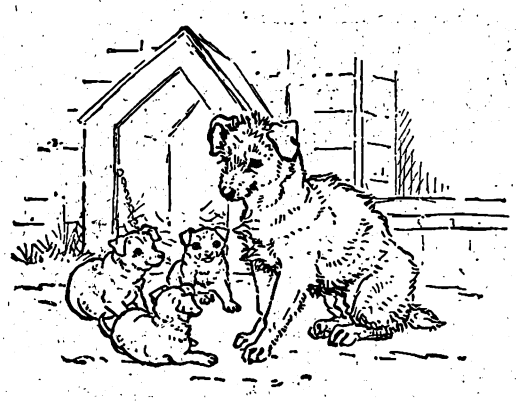

horses, and at the blow the leader gave one plunge and dragged the other in its frenzy down the drive.

Escherling was aghast at the suddenness of it all, as were the other bystanders. Only Elenore was in the vehicle, her face bloodless and distorted with fear. There was the swan-pond directly before them. She cast one agonised glance over the crowd of faces. A hasty bump against a tree threw off the coachman and left the reins dangling on the ground.

Escherling was telling himself that he had nothing to lose now, but he was wondering if she would think of him. Then he realised that another moment might mean death to her, and he bolted pell-mell through the group in hot pursuit to head them off. A woman ran rapidly after him and held him by the arm, but he shook her off madly. He saw the girl on the cushions turn all at once to him. In that brief space her eyes met his, repentant and tearful.

"Guy! Guy!" she screamed. "Save me!"

She had thought of him after all! With one bound he cleared the intervening space, caught at the bridle and pulled the frightened animals towards the earth, checking their progress so violently that the carriage shook. The horses, taken by surprise, stopped, trembling all over.

She was safe. Thank God for that! Beyond a few scratches the carriage was uninjured, and some distance back kindly hands had attended to the coachman. It was all over now. Escherling restored the reins to the driver's hands and turned to go. He would have risked his life again for another tearful glance from her eyes. But instead, feeling suddenly proud as she uttered no thanks to him, he sought out Esther, who, breathless and despairing, had watched the entire occurrence.

"Mr. Escherling!" he heard his name called in the cold voice again. He did not turn round. The veriest beggar, he told himself, would have thanked him warmly. The rustle of a woman's skirts as she alighted from a carriage, and her light swift tread over the sward behind him caught his ear. But still he paid no heed.

He turned half-way towards her; she was biting her lips to keep the tears back. He looked carelessly at her.

"I—I—want to thank—you," she cried brokenly, "I—I——"

"I do not wish for your thanks," he said cruelly; "I would have done the same for any one else."

"But—you—risked—your life to save mine—my very worthless one," she said hurriedly, nerving herself to be calm, "and—and—I would rather die—than—have you—die," she ended inarticulately, with a little sob. He faced her, almost afraid to trust himself.

"And those—other things which involved my friend's honour?" he asked, sparing her nothing.

"I—I do not care," she sobbed. "He could do nothing dishonourable and wrong. He—he—you—will—drive home with me?"

"If you will let him explain that affair relating to his honour"—Escherling's heart was beating so that it was with difficulty that he spoke. "He—he will not go back unless you will trust him and believe him! Will you, Elenore?"

She bowed her head slowly. She could not speak. Regardless of the curious eyes watching them, Escherling stepped to her and touched the violets at her throat.

"There is one more deception," he said, his hand trembling, her face was so near that he had to look away with resolution.

"I—I—know it," she said uncertainly. "I recognised them," and she led him across the soft grass to where the carriage stood, and as they drove off, living only in each other's presence, a woman's figure walked, as if fatigued, over to the entrance, her face drawn and pale, but in her eyes the light of a great, unselfish joy. It was Esther.

Greque.

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Kettle!!
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Some have already appeared in *Pearson's Magazine*, and there are plenty more to follow.

Here is a rough sketch of him, which, I am afraid, does not do complete justice to his remarkable personality.

Captain Kettle's Adventures, as told in *Pearson's Magazine*, are illustrated by Mr. Stanley L. Wood, one of the finest black and white artists of the day.

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The Mystery of One Palm Spring.

A GLIMMERING breadth of sand burning hot, a pitiless hot sun that made the back tingle; far away a desolate range of hills, still farther away the limit where sight ceased and sand and sky met. Cool, sweet water oozed up from a spring and noiselessly meandered out and spread around and lost itself again in the sand. There were a few bunches of green grass at the edge of the well, and some yerba mansa, with its rank smelling white and gold blossoms, grew in the sand where the water spread out. A solitary palm tree stood there, too; the mystery of the desert rustled in the broad fan leaves which it drooped over the water.

A hut built of mesquit poles, gunny sacks and mud—mostly mud, scooped from where the yerba mansa grew—was near the spring, the back of it against the hill of sand which was higher than the hut, and on the top of which grew a tall, ragged bunch of gallete.

The piece of canvas that hung for a door was pulled back and a woman stepped out. She was young and tall and gracious and queenly of presence; her eyes and hair were the soft darkness of a desert summer night.

A man, tall and dark also, but of a forbidding darkness that seemed rather of soul than of complexion, sat lazily against the palm and blew whiffs of pale smoke up among the cool-looking but hot leaves.

The woman paused with the canvas door in her hand; he indolently turned his head and looked a slow, searching gaze into her face, and watching her thus, he slowly quoted:

"A face—a face that launched a thousand battleships, and fired the cloud-topped towers of Ilium."

A flash of displeasure swept red across her face.

She turned away from him and called in a soft voice that had in it a tone of tenderness:

"Children!"

Two fairy-like children, a boy and a girl, slid down from the tall bunch of gallete and trotted round the hut. Their yellow hair glistened like sunlight caught in a spider web, and so exactly alike were they that, but for the clothes they wore, their own mother could not have told them apart.

"What did you want, mamma?" said the girl.

"What did you want, mamma?" echoed the boy.

"I wanted you, my darlings—I always want you." She hugged them to her breast and kissed them again and again.

"How you do dote on those children," said the man still blowing the pale smoke up among the leaves. "I never could understand how a full grown, sensible person could lavish so much affection on a child; it's a sinful waste of material. Nobody with a love nature so abnormally developed as yours ever amounted to anything in the world—ever did anything for humanity, ever made any great discovery in science, or thought out an invention, or found a new planet; they can do nothing but love, love, love!"

"You never loved anybody, did you?"

"Never; I once made a foolish woman believe that I did."

A reminiscent smile lingered in the cruelly curved corner of his mouth.

The woman shrugged her shoulders contemptuously!

"Poor fool! She did not believe it long!"

"Not long—oh, no; not long. Besides," continued he between the whiffs of smoke, "your kind of love-nature is small—very small; it winds itself round its own and shuts the world of humanity out. It would make any sacrifice, even of life itself, for the thing it loved, but would not sacrifice the thing it loves for all humanity. Now, I suppose you would not be willing to give up those youngsters—although they'd make such beautiful angels—if it would stop the plague or save a million lives?"

She clasped the children closer to her breast.

"You have no heart," she said.

"Heart is not what a civilised world needs; it needs intellect and philosophy and reason. Heart is simply instinct; it is what the wild animal has that stands at bay with her young ones behind her and lets the dogs tear her to pieces."

"Mamma, did the dogs tear the little young animals up?" said the girl.

"Mamma, did the dogs tear the little young animals all up?" echoed the boy.

"No, darlings."

They cuddled nearer to her, and patted her face in trustful lovingness.

The man knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it into his shirt pocket; he laughed an amused chuckle.

"Nature was prodigal of beauty to this family, but was very niggard of brains." He smiled at his own witticism.

The children lay down in the shade of the hut and slept; the woman sat by and fanned them with a leaf of

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the palm. When the sun had nearly set and the oven-like heat of the desert began to cool, then the man went out to where his horses were staked on the scattering bunches of gallete, and led one of them to the hut and turned the other loose. He saddled as leisurely as though all the time in the world were his, and then called to the children.

"Come, children, and take your ride."

They came trotting to him, but when he stooped to lift them, the girl darted away.

"I forgot to kiss mamma," she said.

"I forgot to kiss mamma," cried the boy, darting after her.

He waited patiently; when they came back he set the girl before him and the boy behind the saddle.

"Why do you always put him behind—because he is a boy?"

"No; because he is an echo; why, he hasn't enough individuality to be hypnotised, except through her."

The dark eyes of the woman contracted with displeasure.

"I wish you would not keep the children out so late as you did last night," then wistfully, "please."

"Why?" he asked unconcernedly.

"I was frightened," she said simply; "it was quite dark when you came back."

"Why should you be frightened? This is the safest place in the world for you, and what could happen to the little ones—haven't I had them out riding every evening for a week?"

"And each evening have stayed a little later. Why can I not go with you—I would like to go to-night? I used to ride well."

He glanced uneasily at the loose horse.

"There's no saddle for you."

"I have heard of men who were gallant enough to ride bareback and let women have their saddles."

"They were probably the kind who have hearts," he answered with a joking smile; "to-morrow evening, if you still wish to go."

He touched spur to the horse and galloped away. She stood watching them; a dread settled heavily upon her heart. She watched them till they were a mere moving dot on the sand—watched till she could see them no more; turning away with a sharp sigh she spoke unconsciously aloud:

"I wish I had not let them go."

Startled at the sound of her voice in the stillness, she went into the hut and busied herself shaking up the children's bed. She shook each sheet and quilt, that no bit of dust or sand might be left in it. She patted the pillows lovingly and smoothed them with the palms of her hands.

She sat down in the door and waited. The twilight gathered deeper and duskier, but they did not come. The silence overwhelmed her; it had a million voices. She waited and waited longer yet. A coyotte came stealing up to the spring; she heard it lap, then its light step as it trotted away, then its sharp bark ending in a long whining howl. A big, long-winged black bird swooped over the spring and flopped away in the gathering night; and the big, round moon rolled up out of the hem of the desert.

She could endure the silence and the suspense no longer. She climbed to the top of the sandhill behind the hut and called and shouted their names until her voice was hoarse. A chorus of coyotte howls was the only answer that came back to her.

Midnight came and they did not return. She slung a canteen of water over her shoulder, caught the loose horse, which for some strange reason had not followed its master, and started on their trail. The brilliancy of the full moon made it possible to follow the tracks in the sand on and on, until in the waning light before the dawn she lost them and slid from her horse and sank down and slept.

A lizard ran across her neck and its scratching feet woke her; it was daylight. The horse stood near, eyeing her with human-like intent. She arose and went away again on the tracks.

The day came hot and grew hotter and hotter. It was noon; the baking sun beat down on her head, her back tingled with innumerable blisters, her brain began to be dazed. She came to a place where the tracks confused her, there was such tramping round and round. She stopped and felt strangely dull and puzzled. A coyotte trotted from a knoll; she looked where it had been and saw something lying on the sand. She dropped heavily down the horse's side and staggered to it. Then such a scream broke the silence as never the desert had heard. One of her children lay dead, its little upturned face singeing in the sun; its pretty hands crossed on its breast. Its limbs were straightened and its dress wrapped lightly about its knees. It had been laid there after it was dead. She sat down beside it and gathered it to her breast and rocked it to and fro.

"My pretty one, my little one," she murmured, fondling and kissing it as she talked.

Presently she bethought her of the canteen. There was a little water in it; it was hot. She parted the child's lips and poured the water between them; it ran out of the corners of its mouth. She set it up in her lap and smoothed its silky, hot hair and rubbed her cheek against its cheek, then let it go and clasped her hands, making a hoop round it of her arms. The partly stiffened body balanced for a moment on her lap, then fell over. She caught it again to her breast, laughing a wild, terrible laugh, and started back on the track she had come.

* * * * *

When the grey dawn was fading into light a woman with wild eyes and long, loose-hanging hair, with blistered face and hands and feet, carrying a dead child in her arms, came into the hut by the One Palm Spring and laid it in the bunk in the corner. She crooned hoarsely a sleep song to it. The horse came up to the door.

"Come in," she called to him. "Come in—come in and see the transmigration of souls! Keep still, though—keep still; they are asleep."

* * * * *

One Christmas morning three men awoke in the dawn on the Colorado desert and, shouldering their burden of blankets and fears, trudged onwards through the sand towards the far line of the mountains to the west.

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They had hunted the traditional ship on the desert, likewise the tradition Pegieg mine; had lost their outfit and lost their way. Their canteens were empty that morning.

"If it would only rain!"

"Rain? Look at that sky, you could as easily expect rain out of a brass kettle."

They stopped short in their tracks. In the twinkling of an eye the far-off range of mountains stood before them; so near they could see the canyons, and trees, and rocks. They turned their eyes to the south. The glimmering, defiant Cocopah range, towards which so many bleaching skeletons lay headed, stood out boldly straight against the dawn. But what is that nearer thing? The men caught their breath and looked harder southward. High in the air—and so gratefully near—it was a house; before it a giant palm-tree—one solitary palm—in the midst of a green lawn. There was a horse on the lawn, and a woman sat in the door of the house. It all vanished in a moment. In another moment it was there again—the house so impossibly tall, the legs of the horse so grotesquely long. A long straggling grove of mesquit was this time a part of the scene.

The three men hailed it with different expressions.

"Deliverance!"

"A mirage."

"But this kind of mirage always has a reality at the bottom of it. There is a horse on that green stuff; there is a house of some sort, and a woman sitting in the door, just as surely as yon range of mountains actually exists. It may be twenty miles away, but it is there."

Quicker than thought it all vanished. The shafts of the sun had touched the sand.

Several hours later, three weary, thirsty men, toiling round the end of a long bluff of sand, stopped and shouted simultaneously:

"There!"

"Look there!"

"Look!"

There, right before their eager eyes, was the place the mirage had shown them. The woman still sat in the door, the horse still stood on the lawn. They felt awed, they knew not why. Nearer, the green lawn was a long irregular patch of coarse grass and yerba mansa; the house, a mere mud-walled hut, roofed with poles, from which hung tattered remnants of cloth.

But the woman sat in the door. She leant against the side of it. They could see her—see her attitude of expectancy as plainly as they had seen her in the mirage.

The grove of mesquit began just a little way from the hut.

The men talked:

"Enough beans on that grove to feast a whole tribe of Indians."

"If I were a great artist I would paint that scene and call it 'Waiting.'"

"No need to name it; every one who saw it would know its name."

"That woman is waiting for some man, I'll bet."

They lowered their voices.

"Maybe she is alone and afraid of us."

"I wouldn't blame her to be."

They stepped round the wide-spread palm and stood before the woman. Then they took off their hats and bowed their heads in silence.

It was a corpse in shreds of a dress. H. T. M.

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It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

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All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

All applications to be addressed to "BOOKS," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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FULL PARTICULARS OF THE BIGGEST COMIC SCHEME THAT EVER ENTERED INTO THE MIND OF MAN.

As the historian of the future will some day come to us wanting to know how DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL originated, it is just as well to put the plain facts of the case in evidence at the outset.

We were thoroughly worn out one day recently with Christmas Numbers, competitions, printer's devils, and other editorial nightmares, and when the day's work was done, took an evening off instead of going home.

Chance sent us to Drury Lane Theatre. From the time Dan Leno first came on the stage till the curtain came down we simply sat there and roared. Roared and shrieked and howled, and should have become a disgusting nuisance to everybody around us if everybody around us had not been kept busy howling, shrieking, and roaring also.

The great laugh-maker of the English stage set old Drury ringing with delirious merriment.

It was honest laughter, born of clean wit and clever capers, and the thought, in some strange way, came into our mind that if Dan Leno could be distributed throughout the country, the country would be the better and the happier for it.

Then we went hot and cold in turns, for we saw how this thing could be done.

Five minutes later we were in Dan Leno's dressing-room, discussing the matter with him.

That is how DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL came about.

In a week or two's time it will flood the country—flood every country where the English language is spoken.

There will be no paper in the world like DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL.

It will carry boisterous laughter wherever it goes; it will be the best tonic for a jaded mind; it will be the most reliable doctor to those who are run down; it will, indeed, be the best friend any man can have.

Fun will be its key-note.

It will be the most comic of comic papers.

Those who look for instruction in its pages will look in vain; they will only find genuine and hearty fun—fun everywhere.

Every week Dan Leno will romp and scamper through the illustrated pages of his COMIC JOURNAL; every week he will tell in his own delightful way of the many funny things he has seen, and heard, and done.

All of you have heard of Dan Leno, most of you have seen him and admire him, many of you swear by him and love him.

In future he will take each and every one of you by the hand, as he has never been able to do before, and call you friend, and you will look with longing and pleasure for his weekly visit.

And think what this means!

Was there ever such a thing heard of before?

Here is the funniest man you know coming every week to chat and yarn and laugh with you, and only charge you two farthings for the pleasure of it.

If the people of Great Britain do not rise in their millions and show their appreciation by reading the COMIC JOURNAL, we shall know what to think of them—nothing very satisfactory, let us tell you.

Go to your newsagent now—without delay—tell him DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL is coming out, and tell him, too, that if he fails to keep a copy for you every week, he does so at the peril of his life.

Next week, Dan Leno will say a few words himself, and also tell you the date when the first number will appear—some time this month.

YOUR CHARACTER FROM YOUR HANDWRITING.

To amuse and at the same time to interest our readers we have retained the services of the most expert graphologist of the present day, and even those who do not believe in the art will soon find themselves convinced if they care to send along a specimen of their handwriting upon an unruled sheet of paper with their usual signature and full address. From this their characters will be told. These characters will not necessarily be flattering. They will be bare statements of the truth. In each case six stamps and a stamped, addressed envelope must be inclosed. All letters should be marked "GRAPHOLOGIST," and forwarded to Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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THE SHIFTING SAND.

I had been knocking about the mountains for several weeks, when one evening I found myself in front of a little cabin nestling at the foot of a great mountain, and facing a level stretch of sandy plain dotted with clumps of sage-brush. My horses were tired from an unusually hard day's jaunt, and I was so weary of the solitude of the great trees and hills, and the monotony of self-communion, that I was very glad to pitch camp for the night in a place that promised human companionship.

Dismounting, I removed the saddle from the animal I had been riding, and was busy untying the cords which bound my camp outfit to the other, when I noticed both animals prick up their ears and look intently across the plain. Turning in that direction, I saw coming slowly towards me the figure of a man—an old man apparently, for his long hair and longer beard were snowy white, and his tall form was bent, as with the weight of years. He was dressed in the ordinary garb of a miner—heavy high-top boots, blue denim overall and "jumper," and broad-brimmed white hat. In one hand he carried a long staff, which he occasionally thrust sharply into the sand as he advanced, pausing frequently for a backward glance across the plain.

When he had drawn nearer, I noticed that his staff was peculiarly shod with a long, sharp piece of steel. He was within a few yards of where I stood, when, turning from a last backward glance, his eyes met mine; deep-set, penetrating eyes, looking out from beneath heavy white eyebrows, and taking in with one quick glance my whole array of intruding forces.

I am not by nature a timid man, and years of frontier life have given me an assurance which seldom deserts me; but I do not mind confessing that, as I looked into those eyes, I felt decidedly uneasy as to my reception. I knew instinctively that I stood in the presence of no ordinary backwoodsman, whose rude hospitality belongs to every wayfarer by the right of an unwritten law of frontier etiquette. The cordial note of his rich voice, as he bade me "good evening," reassured me so much, however, that I asked permission to stay all night, hastening to add my name, address, and occupation. He readily assented, and, after showing me where to picket my horses, led the way into the cabin, where he soon prepared a supper to which I did the full justice of a keen appetite.

When the table had been cleared away, and a fresh log laid upon the fire, I got out my pipe and tobacco, offering my host some of the latter, which he accepted; and we were soon chatting together with that cordial good-fellowship peculiar to men under the influence of the seductive weed. I had confided to him my mania for "prospecting," still persistent after years of fruitless efforts to "strike it rich;" and there had fallen between us a short silence, during which I allowed my thought to drift away to a sweet-faced woman whom I had loved silently, hopelessly, for so many years.

Suddenly my host's voice recalled me to the present.

"A mania you called it," he was saying; "and rightly, too, as are all other forms of our greed for gold. Heaven knows no one can realise this truth more bitterly than I!"

The weariness in his voice impressed me painfully. As the lighted match which he held to his pipe flared up, I noted with new interest the deep-set eyes, out of which all gladness had gone, the fine, shapely head, with its crown of snowy hair, the broad sweep of white forehead, and the rugged lines of the face, which must have been handsome in youth. I was speculating as to what his story might be—for that he had a story that set him apart from the common run of men, everything about him plainly declared—when he took his pipe from his mouth, and, without preface or apology, began:

"I have lived in this cabin for eighteen years, never leaving it except for semi-annual visits to the little town across the mountains for my supplies. Eighteen years ago this month I discovered a rich ledge, bearing gold and silver, up the mountain side about a mile. I had high hopes and worked hard, for I possessed the mightiest incentive that can nerve a man to wrest a fortune from fate—a loving little woman back in England awaited my return. Her father, a wealthy, hard-headed old farmer, disapproved of me on general principles, but especially because of my poverty. When I had £2,000 in cash, he said, I might claim her for my wife. We believed the condition equivalent to a refusal of my suit, for the toiling and saving of a lifetime would scarcely win that much money from the few stony acres I possessed. But youth is hopeful and resourceful; so I left my sweetheart, who promised, amid her tears, to be faithful till death, and started for the golden West. I had poor success, however, and at the end of five years was little better off than when I left home. Then it was that I stumbled quite accidentally upon the ledge up the mountain side, so accidentally that I believed it nothing short of providential. Poor fool!"

He laughed bitterly, and then sat watching the smoke which curled in fantastic wreaths from his pipe.

"For some time I worked as seldom men worked before, as man can work only when buoyed up by such hopes as were mine. But I was soon forced to the conclusion that I must have assistance and machinery to develop my mine, both of which required capital—and that I did not have. One day I set out on foot across the mountain in search of someone who would advance the necessary capital for an interest in my mine. You may be sure that it was only after a severe struggle that I brought myself to this step.

"In the first place, I was so greedy for gold that I dreaded sharing the profits with anyone else; and, on the other hand, it was no easy matter to induce anyone to invest in a quartz mine, for this section was then mad on placer mining. Upon reaching town I went straight to the post-office, where, as I expected, I found a letter from my sweetheart. I carried it unopened to my room at the hotel, and sat down to read it, thinking that it would give me new courage for my quest."

The old man paused. Something in his voice kept me silent, too, though I longed to question him as to the outcome of his story. Suddenly he roused himself from his reverie and continued as abruptly as he had ceased.

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"I need not tell you that my letter contained a story as old as love itself—the story of woman's faithlessness. It put out the light of my life at one cruel blow. I did not heed the protestations, all blotted with her tears; I grasped only the one vital point, that she was no longer mine to win, since she had yielded her vows to a richer man; and the bitterness of this blinded me to all else. All night long I sat with the letter in my hand, and when morning came I started for home, following the instinct which leads the wounded animal back to its familiar haunts to die.

"For a long, long time I lay in my little bunk yonder, praying for death, and then there grew in my mind the suggestion of suicide. In a stupid way I reviewed all the routes to eternity at my disposal; but with the fastidiousness of a sick brain, I rejected them, one after another. There was my rifle or my hunting knife, but the thought of their bloody mutilation turned me sick. Then there was a rope, and there," pointing to the stout beam over our heads, "was the impromptu gallows."

At this gruesome suggestion I could not repress a shudder, and was glad that my tell-tale face was hidden by the gathering gloom.

"But I was something of a gentleman in my youth, and hanging was too suggestive of the felon to be pleasant. I got up at last, and dragged myself outside the cabin. Sitting in the sunshine, I lifted my eyes to the westward, and then leapt to my feet, shouting for insane joy. A great bank of grey clouds lay almost touching the mountain tops, and in those clouds was the solution of my death problem. I was mad, you see."

He refilled and relighted his pipe before proceeding.

"You noticed this evening the level stretch of plain to the eastward. The soil is loose, light sand, and the terrific winds which occasionally sweep down over the mountains play mad pranks with it. Great hills and hollows are piled up and scooped out, familiar landmarks are obliterated, and new ones uncovered to-day, and to-morrow the inconstant wind will undo its work, leaving the plain as level as a floor. In the bank of clouds I saw the promise of one of these periodical storms, and like an inspiration to my muddled brain came the idea of fashioning myself a grave, in which I could lie down, allowing the wind to wrap me deeply in a winding-sheet of sand. To think was to act. With a nervous energy, born of madness, I seized a spade and hastened out on the plain."

The old man got up and went to the door. The full moon had climbed well up the heavens, shedding a soft, weird glory over the plain.

"It wasn't far, just out yonder, at the foot of a giant sage-bush that I chose the spot for my grave."

I had risen and stood beside him, looking out across the sand, dotted with numberless sage-bushes, lifting their stunted limbs to the sky. I had no idea which particular shrub he meant, but the awesome story, and his motionless, intent attitude, which recalled his frequent halting and backward glances, as I had watched him coming across the plain in the evening, kept me dumb. He stood thus some time, and then, with a deep sigh, resumed his seat; but I dropped down upon the doorstep; the moonlight was pleasanter than the ghostly shadows of the cabin.

"I worked rapidly, pausing for an occasional reassuring glance at the bank of clouds. I had scooped out the sand to a depth of, perhaps, three feet, when the point of my spade unexpectedly came in contact with a hard surface."

"The bed rock?" I ventured, as the old man stopped short, as though overcome by the memories he had invoked.

"No—and this was what surprised, almost terrified me. I knew that the sand was from ten to twenty feet deep, and that it was impossible that I could have reached bed rock so close to the surface. Carefully pushing the point of my spade about, I found that the obstruction was apparently circular, and perhaps three feet in diameter. A few moments' work cleared away the intervening sand, disclosing a flat, round rock.

"Using my spade, I lifted the rock slowly from its resting-place, and perhaps you can imagine my surprise when I uncovered the dark mouth of a well. I am not naturally a physical coward, but my nerves were so unstrung by all that had gone before, that it was several minutes before I could bring myself to investigate this unexpected development of my grave. At last, however, I secured a pitch stick from the cabin for a torch, and returned to follow this new 'lead' to its conclusion.

"Thrusting the lighted stick into the opening, I found that the well was about four feet deep, and that the sides were walled with rough stones fitted together without mortar. At the bottom, on one side, was a small opening. Lowering myself into the well, I thrust the torch ahead and cautiously crawled through this opening, to find myself in a small chamber, high enough to admit of my standing upright. The walls of the chamber were of the same rude masonry as the well, while the ceiling was composed of stout poles, laid closely together and resting upon the stone walls. Raising the torch above my head, I made a rapid survey.

"Scattered about the floor were rude implements of stone, specimens of primitive pottery, small jars, covered and uncovered, bows and arrows of gaily painted wood, arrow heads, and spear points. I knew at once that I was standing in an ancient Indian grave, and was, therefore, partly prepared for the ghastly picture which was revealed when the light of the torch put the host of lurking shadows to flight. Sitting bolt upright against the farther wall, grotesquely hideous with feathers and other savage adornments, and wrapped about with gaudy robes falling away from the skeleton forms in decaying tatters, were three figures. It was not a pleasant sight, nor one I cared to look upon—the dark faces with their rows of shining teeth, from which the withered lips were drawn in sardonic grins, and the staring caverns, which the flickering light filled with phantom eyes.

"I turned again, with idle curiosity, to the pottery. Pushing off the cover of the jar nearest me, I cautiously thrust my hand into the mouth, and lifted it full to the light; and then I dropped upon my knees, staring stupidly at the glittering heap of yellow sand in my open palm, asking myself if I were dreaming. Ounces of pure, bright gold. As the stupendous fact worked itself through my bewildered brain, I laughed aloud, moving from jar to jar. All told the same story, save two; gold, and full almost to the brim. Gold enough for a king's ransom, and all mine for the taking. And then upon my elation broke the flood of my misery. I was rich now, but, oh, Heaven, of what use? With the irony of an accursed fiend, fortune had waited until I was ready to die, until my hopes were already dead, and then overwhelmed me with her golden shower. I raved and swore until I was exhausted, and then fell prone upon the floor, overcome by my passion. Presently I grew calmer. The storm of my rage had

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carried away with it all pain and disappointment. The basilisk glitter of the gold had got into my eyes, conjuring into life another sort of demon than despair. I was rich, and riches meant much; more than love or happiness, perhaps. Riches meant power—and revenge. I could go back to my old home and live like a prince, *her* next door-neighbour. Many things come to him who has the patience to wait and the money to do. I had both, and would be ready when the time came to pay off her father, her husband, herself in the Devil's coin of hate, and debt I owed them.

"So I gloated over my suddenly acquired wealth, and my wild imaginings of revenge, till the charnel-house air of the chamber extinguished my torch, leaving me in Egyptian darkness. With a muttered oath at my stupidity, I flung the useless stick away, and groping about, caught up one of the precious jars, and worked my way to the opening. It was no easy task without a light, and I was very glad to find myself at last in the well, still holding the jar against my chest.

"When I lifted my face above the opening of the well, I was greeted with a blinding, biting shower of sand. The storm, which was to have been my sexton, had come, and, as if to punish me for my defection, buffeted me most cruelly. Carefully replacing the cover to the well, after I had climbed out, I lifted my jar of gold in my arms and started for the cabin. The sky was overcast, and the blinding, whirling sheets of sand so bewildered and exhausted me that once or twice I thought I should have to give up trying to reach shelter. At last, however, I stumbled across the threshold of this room, more dead than alive, and I believe I never before or since was so glad to get inside these four walls.

"All night long the wind raged with a fury I have never known since in the long years of my residence here. When morning came, my first thought was of my treasure-house. I hastily dressed and stepped outside. The sun was just above the horizon, smiling genially upon the quiet landscape, which somehow looked very strange to my anxious eyes, as they sought the particular sage-bush which marked the entrance to the grave. Not a landmark could I see. With fiendish malignity the wind had effaced every familiar bush, and hillock, and ravine. The plain lay glittering in the sunlight, a grey, level, interminable waste of sand. I returned to the cabin disappointed and chagrined, but not uneasy; and thinking myself lucky to have fetched one jar with me, I stooped and stroked its ugly sides with a miser's tenderness. Then, to reassure myself by a sight of the yellow dust, I put my hand into the jar and lifted it full to the light.

"I think I went mad again for a moment, for when I came to myself I was standing over the shattered jar, looking down upon its scattered contents, which twinkled in the patch of sunlight from the open door—white, red and yellow beads! In the darkness I had got hold of one of the only two jars in the grave which did not contain gold."

"But surely you found the grave again?" I said.

The old man shook his head.

"From that day to this I have been searching for the entrance to the grave. I have gone over every foot of yon sand. Storms have swept over it, casting up and tearing down hillocks, covering and uncovering sage-brush! but never once revealing the secret held fast in the shifting sand. Day after day, armed with my steel-shod pole, I've sought so fruitlessly that I should be tempted to believe the whole thing a delusion of my over-wrought mind, were it not for the shattered jar and the beads which I have in my cupboard. I cannot tear myself away from the accursed search, which has grown to be a mania that nothing but death can cure."

The sky had become overcast as he ceased, and the soft soughing of the pines told of a rising wind.

"It is going to blow to-night, and that means no sleep for me," said my host, arousing me as from a dream, after a long silence; "but you are tired, and I have thoughtlessly kept you awake. Let me show you where to make your bed."

I was soon stretched between blankets and left alone to sleep. But the strange story to which I had just listened had so impressed me that for hours I lay awake, thinking how curiously the man's early history coincided with my own. The mania for gold, the incentive to treasure hunting—love for a beautiful woman—the exile to the mountains, all were the same; only in my case the woman loved was bound to me by no spoken tie.

Years ago I vowed that I would never ask Agnes to be my wife until I had made a fitting home for her, and it had been this apparently hopeless ambition that had sent me away to the mountains, where I determined to remain until either death or fortune cured me of my mania. To-night, as I lay revolving in my mind every detail in the story of my host, I felt that death alone would effect the cure.

Just as I sank into a slight slumber a lusty halloo shook my drowsy senses, then voices and the tramping of horses broke irregularly into the softer monotony of the rising wind, and presently my host entered with someone, who, like myself, spread his blankets upon the floor, and then, lulled by the wind, I fell fast asleep.

When I awoke the sun was streaming in at the open door of the cabin. Leisurely dressing myself, I went outside to look after my horses, and met the stranger, a prospector, like myself. As we exchanged words of greeting, my eyes travelled carelessly across the plain until they were arrested by an object lying at the foot of a giant shrub, an object so like the figure of a man that I broke off what I was saying and ran swiftly towards it, with a strange fear tugging at my heart.

Lying on his back, his white face upturned to the smiling sky, I found my old host, his madness cured at last. Grasped firmly in both hands, and lying partly across his dead body, was the steel-shod pole, the point of which was thrust deeply into the loose sand. Together, the stranger and I carried him into the cabin, and then I went to bring the coroner from the settlement across the mountain.

As the last rays of the setting sun slanted across the fateful plain, we buried him close by his cabin door, with the crumpled, time-seared letter from his sweetheart hidden over his peaceful heart. The coroner took possession of his effects, among which we found the broken jar and the beads. The next morning we separated and went our several ways. For two days I travelled, and then a thought, which had haunted me ever since I found the old man lying dead, caused me to retrace my steps; my suspicions proved correct. I found that the point of his staff had touched a rock, the entrance to his long sought treasure-house, and the shock of joy had killed him. The interior of the grave was as he had described it to me, and—but why go into details? Fortune, not death, cured my mania and satisfied my ambitions. A month later I was married to Agnes.

C. C. Orsdall.

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By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A Change of Course.

When Lorrain came on deck the next morning at daybreak he found the *Minnehaha* spinning along over a smooth sea out of sight of land and absolutely alone on the face of the waters. He looked at the compass and saw that she was heading south-east, from which he concluded that she had cleared the island and was making straight for the Mid-Atlantic. Captain Peters was already on deck, so he took the opportunity of telling him of the change in his plans and taking his opinion on his scheme for despoiling the treasure ships of the new El Dorado.

The little skipper walked beside him one or two turns in silence, twisting his goatee and looking straight down at the deck. Then he stepped to the rail, sent a stream of tobacco juice into the water, dropped a well masticated quid after it—very early morning was the only time he allowed himself the nautical luxury of a chew—and came back and said:

"By the Great Snake, Seenyor, you *have* a head on you, if you'll excuse me saying so. Now I call that just one of the daisiest schemes that a man, a real genius, could think of. Piracy—waal, yes, I guess that's about the size of it, but anyhow we might as well run the Roger up now as anything else. If we're caught we'll just be sunk on sight and that's all there is in it. But as I said before, Seenyor, I'm yours to command while the wages are paid regular, and if there's any galoot aboard that makes any difficulty about obeying my orders I'll make things so difficult for him that he won't find living worth while.

"Yes, it's a great scheme, and I'm proud to work for a man who could think a thing like that out. And what sort of a show do I think we've got? Just about the same as the old fellows had in their day, as far as I can see. You see, we go by steam nowadays instead of sail, and we have handier shooting-irons, and as long as we can steam faster than anything that's sent to chase us and shoot straighter and hit harder than the others, I don't see why we shouldn't have just as good a show as Kidd or Morgan or Blue-Nosed Jake or the best of them.

"Of course, it's only reasonable to allow that there'll be an end of it and us sometime, but that's got to happen anyway, and if we have a good time in between I don't see that there's very much to howl about. We shall want another dozen or so white men on board, but we can pick them up as we go up the West Coast. Callao and Guayaquil and Panama are not bad places either for signing on hard cases who'll do most things for being paid. There'll be plenty of tramps lying around handy on the way to get coal from, and we've ammunition enough on board for a whole naval war, so as far as ship and crew's concerned, Seenyor, you can look on it as settled."

"Very well," said Lorrain when the skipper had completed his review of the situation. "Of course, I shall leave all the details to you. Now I want to get that half-bred little greaser out of the way. I'm pretty certain that he's been playing a double game with us, and certainly those two cruisers could not have turned up at Samana Bay unless they had known where we were going, so somebody must have told them—and that somebody must have been Don Gregorio or Madame Sybil. I think you said the other day that you wouldn't mind seeing the lady a widow?"

"That's so, Seenyor. I've led a pretty lonely and wild life so far, and you know, sir, however fond a man may be of fighting and knocking around the odd corners of the earth money-hunting, there are times when his heart aches, as I believe the poets say, for the sweetness of love and the charms of female companionship. I believe that's how they put it, and anyhow it comes to that. I've seen one or two fine women here and there about the earth, but, by Josh, sir, this lady goes over 'em easily, and if she's got to put the weeds of widowhood on—waal—sir—I'll help her to do it, just as slick as I'll help her to take 'em off again."

"That's the first time I've heard you deviate into sentiment, Captain Peters," laughed Lorrain, "but I'm very glad the arrangement meets with your approval. I'm going to get married myself on the first opportunity, so we may as well make a double wedding of it. I shall leave it to you to talk Madame Sybil over. Of course, if she should have the bad taste to make any objections, I dare say you'll find means to persuade her. I give you quite a free hand, you know, only, for Lady Pendril's sake, we can't have any—well—irregularities on board. I see no reason why even piracy should not be kept respectable. We'll run into Rio and get the ceremonies performed in the proper way, or perhaps we might pick a parson out of some ship we want to borrow coal from on the way. I don't care what it is so long as we put the business through in order. And now, what are we going to do with this wretched little greaser?"

"Hanging's short and handy, Seenyor, but it's a bit violent when there are ladies around. Now, as we've started pirating, what's your opinion of doing things in the good old style and marrooning him?"

"Curiously enough," said Lorrain, "that was just what I

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intended to do with Mr. and Mrs. Tristam—or at any rate Mr.—if I could once have got them safe on board the yacht. It was in my mind to take them down to Trinidad, you know the one I mean, down south off the coast of Brazil where there's a fine healthy breed of land-crabs."

"You've got it again, Seenyor," said the little skipper, looking up with an ugly glint in his eyes. "That's it. His keep won't cost much coming down, for we shall be there in a few days, and it's a place I've always wanted to get ashore on. I suppose you know there are all sorts of stories going around about pirate's treasures buried in it. It used to be a great place two or three hundred years ago by all accounts, and perhaps we could spare a few days for a hunt round."

"Not at all a bad idea, Captain," said Lorrain. "I don't see why the fishes should enjoy our mutual friend any more than the land-crabs. We have plenty of time before the rivers open up north, so I don't see why we couldn't afford a few days at Trinidad. I'll tell General Gregorio that he is respited for the present, and meanwhile you can amuse yourself by making the running with Madame Sybil. That will be a little entertainment for him as well as for you. Altogether, I think we shall be a very jolly party, and if Madame Sybil is inclined to be unreasonable you can tell her what we are going to do with the General, and ask whether she'd prefer to amuse herself with him and the land-crabs on Trinidad. I think when she sees the crabs she'll prefer you."

Captain Peters looked up rather dubiously, as though he didn't consider Lorrain's last remark in the very best of taste. Then he looked down again and laughed and said:

"Waal, I'm free to allow, Seenyor, that I have seen bigger and handsomer men than me, though I haven't met a better one yet in a scrap; but I'm not figuring on any woman who's taken up with that half-baked little greaser giving *me* the mitten. No, sir! If she does, by Josh, I'll take her ashore at Trinidad, and introduce her to the best assortment of land-crabs I can find, and ask her what she thinks of them."

At this moment her ladyship came on deck, and Lorrain left the skipper to tell her of the change in Don Gregorio's fate, and about the stories of buried treasure on Trinidad.

"You couldn't possibly have a better chance of using the Magnet," he said, "although, of course, we shall have to do it quietly together. If you do find anything and we dig it up, it will be the finest thing possible—not only in the financial sense either. I will let it get about among the crew that you possess some magical quality of going straight to wherever gold is hidden, just as those fellows who find water are supposed to have, and they'll call you the Gold-Finder, and they'll worship you and do anything for you. In fact it'll make you an absolutely ideal pirate queen."

"That's capital!" said her ladyship. "Though I must say I think it's hard lines on that wretched little President. It must be much nicer to be hung or shot at once, than left alone in a horrible place like that to starve to death or be eaten alive. Ugh! What an end—to have pieces pulled off you, until there's nothing but the bones left. Well, I came to tell you that coffee's ready."

For the next week the voyage southward proceeded without event, although there was a good deal of work done on board the *Minnehaha*. Her white hull was painted black with a gold band running along under the rail. Her name was changed to the *Circe*, to agree with a convenient duplicate set of papers. A couple of yards were manufactured out of spare spars and slung on the foremast, giving her more of a brigantine look, and the damaged funnel was cut away and the draught led under the deck into the forward one. Her armament was stowed away, and her whole appearance was so utterly changed that if the *Pocahontas* herself had hove in sight she would not have recognised her.

When she was alone she steamed at twenty-five knots so long as the sea was anything like smooth, as it practically always was, but when she fell in with any of the numerous craft bound for the South American ports she at once slowed down and trundled along at a respectable twelve or fourteen knots.

Don Gregorio had wanted to clasp Lorrain's knees and weep over his shoes when he told him that he was not going to hang him. But when he went on to tell him that he was going to make him monarch *pro tem* of Trinidad and king of the land-crabs he nearly escaped his fate by a fit of apoplexy, and when he got out of that he raged and raved and wept himself into a state bordering on insanity. He was a hopeless glutton, and as Lorrain took an unholy pleasure in inviting him to the saloon table he made the best of his few remaining opportunities, and got fatter and greasier every day, in spite of the unpleasant remarks which his persecutor let fall every now and then about the kind consideration that he was showing for his future companions on the island.

Her ladyship and Lorrain, meanwhile, were highly diverted by the rapidly developing courtship of Captain Peters. Hard in business, perfect in his profession, and utterly pitiless and unscrupulous as he was in a fight, he seemed for the time being a completely changed man. Until now he had been somewhat careless as to his outward appearance, but now he arrayed himself in the whitest of duck and drill adorned with the brightest of gold lace and brass buttons. He shaved twice a day instead of once every three days, and used the most atrocious language if his boy brought him his pipe-clayed shoes with a speck of anything like dust or dirt on them. Then he brought out a banjo, which he could tinkle with no mean skill, and in the moonlit hours of the middle watch at night he would sing plantation love-songs in a voice like the sighing of steam from an escape-pipe.

At first Madame Sybil had no notion that all this was meant for her, and her ladyship, who treated her with the most consistent politeness and cordiality, took very good care not to enlighten her. She had dropped the President completely, and regarded the terrible fate that was in store for him with apparently absolute indifference, which might perhaps have been modified somewhat had she known of the choice that she would soon be called upon to make.

But one night—it was the night before the yacht was due to arrive at Trinidad—her ladyship arranged it so that Captain Peters should find her alone after dinner on the quarter deck, and the skipper, as he described it to Lorrain afterwards, just saw the coast clear and sailed in. It must be admitted that he was considerably nervous at first, but when Madame Sybil had grasped his meaning and had turned on him in a sudden tempest of scorn and anger, his courage came back instantly. Lorrain had strengthened his hands by telling him of the share she had had in Sir Harry Viney's murder, and so he bluntly put it to her that, if there was any condescension at all in the matter, it was on his side when he offered to give, as he put it, his name and honour into the keeping of a woman who ought to have been hanged some years before.

This only produced more fury, followed by tears and then, unheeding both, and telling her if she didn't sit still he'd hold her or send for a sailor to tie her up to the rail, he proceeded to calmly expound the advantages or disadvantages which would attend her acceptance or refusal of his offer. Then he left her speechless with fear and horror, for she knew that she had not a friend on board, and that Lorrain would leave her on the desolate rocks of Trinidad to the mercy of the land-crabs with every bit as little compunction as he would leave Don Gregorio.

Later on her ladyship joined her on deck and then, strange as was the relationship between them, the natural sympathy of sex asserted itself and, in a perfect torment of remorse and fear, she laid the whole of her guilty soul bare before her and implored her pity and help.

Unhappily, however, her confession included certain revelations about Lorrain which instantly hardened her ladyship's heart, although they made no change in her outer

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demeanour. She sympathised and remonstrated with her in the same breath, and did both very nicely, but she could give her no better comfort than such as lay in a contrast between her fate with Don Gregorio on Trinidad and her lot as the wife of Captain Peters, drawn very much in favour of the latter.

The next morning everyone was on deck by sunrise, looking ahead at a blue-grey mass rising rapidly out of the waters ahead. Don Gregorio was grovelling for the last time at Lorrain's feet, praying for mercy, and Madame Sybil was thinking of the creeping horrors crawling about among those distant rocks of Trinidad and making up her mind that, after all, Captain Hiram Peters was not quite so loathsome as they were.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A Tragedy and a Treasure Hunt.

Conditions of space as well as considerations of humanity combine at this point in the narrative to render necessary the drawing of a veil over the hideous fate of the miserable Don Gregorio. He was a man thoroughly bad and base, and, as we know, more than one murder could be justly laid to his charge. He was thus doubly and trebly deserving of death—but such a death! A death whose unutterable horror could be mitigated only by madness, even if by that—it is doubtful whether any crime or accumulation of crime could merit such a fate at the hands of human justice. But there was no idea of justice in the cold-blooded, calculating cruelty of those who handed him over to his horrible executioners. It had only two objects—revenge and terror, and both these were amply gratified.

Madame Sybil was taken on shore in the same boat as the victim, who was already reduced to a state bordering on idiotcy, but no sooner did she see the first of the awful creatures come crawling out of their holes among the rocks which strewed the little valley that is their particular haunt, than she went into violent hysterics and had to be carried back, screaming to the boat. Lorrain left Captain Peters to arrange the details of the execution, as he put it, and after bidding an ironical farewell to his almost unconscious victim, he landed from a second boat with her ladyship and four sailors armed with heavy clubs and carrying provisions for the day, and set out across the narrow beach towards a rugged goat-path which appeared to lead to the interior of the island.

The sailors went a little ahead, two on each side beating back the land-crabs which were now beginning to swarm out on the beach as though to repel the invaders of their domain. Her ladyship clung to Lorrain's arm and stumbled along with closed eyes, until they reached the bottom of the path. She was half helped, half carried, up this to the top of the first ridge where the ground became more practicable, and then Lorrain told two of the sailors to go back to the boat and the other two to remain on watch till he returned. Then he took one of the clubs and a satchel of provisions, and set out with her ladyship to explore the interior of the island, which, as the reader is probably aware, is of volcanic origin with a summit broken up into little circular valleys or depressions not unlike ancient craters.

As soon as they were out of sight of the two sailors her ladyship took the Magnet out of its usual hiding-place in her hair, attached a thread to it, and held it out at arm's length. It wavered about aimlessly, swinging to and fro in the wind and betraying no signs of attraction. Then they began their walk again, taking the easiest ground, and this led in the direction of the northern side of the island. They wandered about for a couple of hours or so, without the Magnet giving any indication of the presence of gold, and then Lorrain suggested that they should sit down and have a sandwich and a glass of wine.

They found a shady spot under an overhanging ledge of rock, and while they were sitting there eating and drinking, with no apparent concern for the ghastly tragedy that was about to be enacted on the beach below, her ladyship pointed to the other side of the little circular valley, from the top of which the ledge jutted out, and said:

"Doesn't it look as if there had once been some steps over there? D'you see—leading up round the corner of that big black rock."

"I believe you're right," said Lorrain, getting up. "Perhaps your ladyship's sharp eyes have found the way to what we're looking for. I'll go and explore."

He went across the valley and examined the place narrowly. Then he beckoned to her and called out:

"There has been a way up here to somewhere. We may as well find out where it leads to."

She followed him. He took her hand, and they climbed up a rugged, broken half-path, half-stairway, which became more and more like a stairway the higher they got. It was evidently very old and had not been trodden for many years, for the dust that lay thick on it showed no signs of footsteps. It led them up round the shoulder of a huge mass of rock, but still the Magnet gave no sign. They scrambled on higher still till they found themselves level with the ledge under which they had been sitting, and from where they stood they could see that a narrow cleft opened in the rocks immediately above it.

"That doesn't look unlike the entrance to one of the pirate caves that I used to read about in the days when I never thought of going into the business myself, much and all as I yearned to do so," said Lorrain, pointing towards it. "Let us go and see if the Magnet will say anything there."

They made their way along a faintly indicated path which ended on the ledge itself. Here her ladyship held out the needle again at arm's length, and to their delight it swung steadily in the direction of the cleft.

"There it is!" exclaimed Lorrain, striding towards the fissure. "There's the pirates' treasure-house, if we can only find the way in."

The cleft was only about 6ft. wide and some 30ft. deep, narrowing and sloping slightly towards the end. The floor was covered with loose rubble and dust, and there was nothing from end to end of the fissure to show that it had been disturbed by any work of man since the island had existed.

But the wonderful instrument in her ladyship's right hand proved that this was not the case, for the farther she advanced down the cleft the more steadily it inclined downwards until, when they were stopped by a blank wall of rock at the end, it pointed down at an angle of about sixty degrees and remained steady.

"There's gold somewhere down there," said Lorrain, "and that's enough for us at present. We shall want tools and perhaps drills and dynamite to find the way in, so we may as well get back and have them brought. I'll tell the men a nice little fairy-tale about the way in which you were led straight to it by that wonderful instinct of yours, and when they find it they'll just worship you. They were a little bit disappointed about Don Christoval's treasure-chest, but if they find anything worth having here, you'll be able to do anything with them afterwards. We shan't have much difficulty in getting as many recruits as we want after this."

"No," she said, "I don't suppose we shall. What a pity it is that we couldn't just have gone gold-hunting in a quiet and respectable way without having to become pirates."

"That is entirely due to Mr. Tristam's unwarrantable interference," replied Lorrain as they turned away. "I hope that some of those shells which we managed to land on board the *Pocahontas* relieved him permanantly of the necessity for gold-hunting."

"It would serve him quite right," said her ladyship, with a bit of a snap in her voice. "It was all his fault They fired on us first. I shouldn't be very sorry to hear that they've all gone to the bottom together. They'd have sent us there if they could have done."

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"A sentiment well worthy of the future Pirate Queen!" laughed Lorrain. "At any rate we must have hit them pretty hard, but if we haven't sunk them they'll soon hear of our doings on the Alaskan coast, and then we may have the chance of another brush with them. Now, I wonder if I can make those two fellows hear."

He took a whistle out of his pocket and blew a long call on it, which was answered by a faint "Ahoy!" from the rocks to the southward. Then the form of one of the sailors appeared on the top of a ridge making signals to them with his arms. In half-an-hour or so they had reached the top of the path leading to the beach, and Lorrain took her ladyship straight to the boat and sent her off to the yacht. As she was crossing the beach guarded by the sailors sounds reached her ears from a little cove at the other end of it, hidden from view by a row of rocks, which caused her to give one terrified glance at Lorrain and then stop them with her hands. When she got on board she found Madame Sybil prostrate with terror and nervous exhaustion in the cabin.

"Have they done it?" she asked in a weak, trembling voice.

"No," said her ladyship with a gesture of unutterable disgust, "but I think they're doing it. Ugh! It's too horrible to think about! I've got something better to tell you. The Señor and I think we have found a buried pirates' treasure. The men are going to dig it out to-day, so I hope we shall be able to give you a nice wedding-present."

It was on the tip of Madame Sybil's tongue to ask whether it was the Gold Magnet that had pointed the treasure out to them, but happily for her she had self-control enough to keep from speaking the fatal words, for if she had once shown her ladyship that she knew the secret she would have been sharing Don Gregorio's fate within an hour.

Lorrain came off with Captain Peters in the other boat shortly after, and news at once ran through the ship that the whereabouts of a buried treasure had been discovered. An expedition was at once organised and equipped with all the needful tools and blasting apparatus, and Lorrain led the men straight to the fissure, taking care to impress upon them the fact that it had been discovered entirely by Lady Pendril, who had consented to place her wonderful faculty at the disposal of himself and his companions.

The men were naturally a little incredulous at first, but when a couple of hours' work with pick and drill, and the explosion of a dynamite cartridge had shattered the rock floor at the end of the fissure and disclosed a black hole like the entrance to a tunnel, their doubts began to disappear, and when they went down with their torches and candles and found themselves in a great, rough-hewn vault, half natural and half artificial, with ingots of gold and silver piled high up the side and half-a-dozen iron bound oak-chests, which looked as if they had just come out of the treasure-room of an old Spanish plateship, stacked against the further end, they needed no more convincing, and they raised a shout which made the long-silent vault fill with dull echoes as though the ghosts of the old pirates were still guarding their treasure and resented the intrusion.

No time was lost in getting the precious contents of the cave out and transporting it to the beach, but although every man that could be spared from the yacht joined in the welcome task, it was sundown before the last of the chests was got on board the boat.

From Trinidad the *Circe* steered for Rio de Janeiro, and there, while she was filling her coal-bunkers, there was a quiet double wedding at the English church, in which Madame Sybil played her part with dignified resignation. She had been given to understand that any attempt to communicate with the authorities or to make a scene would lead to immediate and disastrous consequences. But this warning was really unnecessary, for she was well aware that any exposure must necessarily include revelations as to her own past which would certainly result in the loss of her liberty, if not of her life, and so she wisely elected to hold her tongue.

The voyage from Rio round the Horn was eventless, and as comfortable as the weather permitted. The *Circe* proved herself a splendid sea boat, and her powerful engines answered every call made on them without a hitch. She coaled again at Valparaiso, and here Captain Peters picked up a dozen men after his own heart, thoroughly hard cases who only needed just such an iron hand as his over them to go anywhere and do anything as long as gold and plenty of it was to be the reward either of working or fighting. Those of the black crew who were not considered to be of any further use were quietly shot one night when the *Circe* was well out to sea and dropped overboard, and the work of doing this was entrusted to the new hands by way of initiating them into the fellowship of crime which now held the *Circe*'s company together.

Another call was made, at Callao, and six more picked scoundrels passed on board under the approving eyes of the Captain. This gave him a clear five-and-twenty men outside his stokers, engineers, and quartermasters. Lorrain had bought regular yachting sailors' outfits for all of them at Valparaiso and Callao, and no one to see them at muster would have thought them anything else than a thoroughly smart and respectable yacht's crew. Their numbers, it is true, would have looked a little suspicious, so too would their weapons could anyone have seen them when Captain Peters—who now thought himself no whit inferior to the commander of one of Uncle Sam's cruisers—was drilling them after notions of his own; but he took very good care that not more than a dozen or so should ever show themselves together on deck when the yacht was in port, and of course not a weapon was ever seen on board.

Several times during the northward passage the dynamite cannon and machine guns were had up and mounted for the men to practice at them in squads or gun-crews, and everything was done to make the *Circe* as formidable a fighting craft as possible against the coming struggle for the possession of the spoils of El Dorado in the North.

After touching at Callao and San Francisco, mainly for the purpose of keeping the men contented by letting them have a run ashore and of learning the news, the *Circe* steamed straight on to Seattle. At San Francisco, Lorrain was delighted to hear a full and particular, if not exactly true, account of the running fight between the *Minnehaha* and the three cruisers off Samana. The *Hermione* and the *Pocahontas* had been badly injured by the dynamite shells, but the *New York* had crippled the pirate yacht and enabled the *Pocahontas* to overtake her and blow her out of the water with her heavy guns, after which the three cruisers had got back to Kingston to refit—all of which, with a good deal of circumstantial and imaginative detail, was very pleasant reading indeed to the owner and captain of the *Circe*.

At Seattle, which was reached towards the end of March, Lorrain gave himself out as an English gentleman adventurer named Robinson, who had come out with a party of picked men in his own yacht to try his luck in the new gold fields. He explained to interviewers that the *Circe* was of very light draught, and he meant to take her right up the Yukon, if possible to Dawson City itself, and see if he couldn't bring her back loaded with gold.

This enabled him to lay in not only as much coal as he could cram into the yacht's hold, but also an ample stock of dynamite and other high explosives, without suspicion, and it further enabled him to get precise information as to the sailings of the different steamers which were to bring the winter's accumulation of gold down from St. Michaels at the mouth of the Yukon river. He had the routes carefully pricked out on the best chart that money could buy, and over this he and Captain Peters put their heads together and decided on the most suitable places for lying in wait for the homeward bound treasure-ships. And thus in due course it came to pass that on the thirtieth of March the *Circe* steamed out of Puget Sound to make an unique name and place for herself in the annals of piracy.

(To be continued.)

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THE DOG COLLAR.

A few years ago there lived in seclusion at 13, Rue Fabert, an old major, whom the urchins of the esplanade of Les Invalides had surnamed "Major Zouzou." Everybody in the district knew Major Zouzou, a good-looking old man, who had been decorated with the military medal and the cross of the Legion of Honour for his valuable services on the battlefields of Italy in 1859, and Lorrain in 1870.

For four years the old officer had lived alone with his dog, which responded to the name of Zouzou; hence the surname given to the master.

Somewhat of a cur, Zouzou was part shepherd dog, and part hunter. From the hunting dog he had inherited long ears and searching eyes, and from his shepherd ancestor, he had a shaggy coat and a long tail, ending in a large tuft, which afforded great amusement to the urchins.

Zouzou was a vagabond by nature, and liked to take walks by himself, and one often saw him walking along in a haphazard way, his nose to the wind.

In the morning by sunrise he would come downstairs with a basket hung round his neck. He would then trot off to see the baker, who, being accustomed to his daily visit, would put into the basket a penny roll, which was to go with the chocolate for the Major's breakfast.

From there he would go to a newsagent's in the vicinity, and they would give him a morning paper. Then, triumphant, the sagacious animal would bring the things to his master.

The Major was passionately fond of his dog; he brought to mind many fond memories. It was his daughter, his dearly loved child, who had fed Zouzou with a spoon and watched over him with loving kindness. Now the child was dead and the old man was left alone with Zouzou.

And often in the evening when the dog slept, the old fellow would ask himself what would become of Zouzou if he were taken away.

"Never mind, my friend," he always said, "I will leave enough to care for you. Rest assured, my good Zouzou, your master will never forget you."

A year rolled by. Zouzou became smarter. Every day the Major would brush him and clasp round his neck a magnificent collar, which he had given him at the New Year, for he always gave Zouzou a New Year's gift.

Every New Year's day he would take Zouzou for a walk on the boulevards and show him the pastry shops.

But to-day the old man was too old, too much broken down to go so far; so he had given Zouzou a beautiful brand new collar, fastened with an elegant nickel-plated padlock. On the collar was engraved these words:

> My Name is Zouzou.
>
> I Live at No. 13 Rue Fabert.

* * * * *

The Major fell ill. Zouzou alone remained with him. Sitting on a chair near his master's bed, he never left him for a minute, mingling his plaintive barks with the sighs of the sick man.

Then the Major died. And after the burial the caretaker closed the rooms of the deceased, and chased Zouzou away with a broomstick. But the affectionate dog would not go away; he would lie day and night on the pavement opposite the house whch his master had occupied.

The caretaker would throw buckets of water over him and the children would throw stones at him; but Zouzou never moved. He would lie there as though hypnotised near the house where his master died and from where, he, perhaps, hoped to see him appear.

Several days later there arrived from the provinces some nephews of the Major, who hastened to divide amongst themselves the furniture, linen and other objects of value left by the old man. On seeing the windows, whence his master had so often called him, being opened, Zouzou made one bound, and, notwithstanding the concierge who tried to prevent it, he flew up the two flights of stairs and leapt joyously into the room of the old soldier.

"Look, there's his dirty old dog!" said one nephew, giving the animal a kick. Then Zouzou descended the stairs mournfully and went away. And no one ever saw him again in that part of the town. His vagabond life recommenced. Every day he walked on straight before him, without purpose, his nose to the wind.

The winter came on; for two days the snow fell continuously, and Paris put on a white veil. What thoughts were then passing through poor Zouzou's mind?

Several times he started in the direction of Pere Lachaise, where his master was buried—he knew it; but he was always chased away by the caretakers. Then, worn out by fatigue, dying of hunger, he stretched himself out by a high wall, as though decided to die there.

The hours passed slowly and wearily. Several times policemen went by without noticing the poor black head emerging from the ermine mantle. One hurrying couple noticed him.

"What is that?" asked a woman's cheery voice, "look, Henry." The workman—for this late passer-by wore a workingman's costume—stopped, and that he might see better, put down his little girl of three or four years, whom he had been carrying.

"Don't you see that it is a dog?" said the young man.

"Oh, the poor creature," said Clotilde; "if we took it with us—shall we? Poor brute!" exclaimed Clotilde. "We can't leave him there, can we, Henry? See, he has on a collar; he has probably got lost; to-morrow we can return him to his master." Then she added smilingly: "And perhaps we may get a reward."

"If we take this dog home I am afraid they will put us out," objected her husband.

It was in the house of this honest labourer that Zouzou was that evening installed before a good coke fire.

"Quick, Fifine, some milk; give me the jug; we will get him warmed up," said the delighted Clotilde.

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"Look, Henry, how pretty he is; what good, intelligent eyes he has! Surely we will get a reward to-morrow."

"The dog is a nuisance, and I fear we shall be obliged to keep him," said Henry; "but if you do not find the owner, take him to the pound and then all will be over."

Clotilde did not respond, but Fifine, the spoilt child, clung to Zouzou and began already to defend him. The child remembered how Zouzou had taken to her and she wished to keep him.

"She will have an attack of the nerves if you take the dog away from her," said Clotilde. And that evening there was a family feud, even in that humble dwelling. The workman reproached himself with having allowed his wife to bring home this dog, who seemed to promise to give them many disagreements.

Clotilde was sulky, but knowing how kind-hearted her husband was, she did not worry much about Zouzou's fate. "To-morrow he will be the first to want to keep him," thought she, and as to sending him to the pound, she would never hear of that—never!

The next day Clotilde and Fifine took poor Zouzou to Rue Fabert. The concierge was at the door of the house. Perceiving the dog she exclaimed loudly. "Oh, the horrid thing!" she cried. "Why did you bring him back to us, madam?"

"But," said Clotilde, "the dog belongs to someone in the house."

"To an old major who has recently died," replied the concierge. "You may keep the horrid creature; we want no more of him here!"

"Very well, madam, I will keep him," replied the young woman gently; "we are already very fond of him. Come, Zouzou; come my good dog."

In the evening, when Henry returned and found Zouzou lying near the fire, he frowned.

"It's decided that we keep him," said his wife. "He belonged to an old soldier who has just died. Have pity on him, my dear Henry."

Zouzou's nature seemed to change; he never went out alone now. Sometimes, in the heavy heat of the summer, when it was almost suffocating in the home of the workman, he would glance longingly toward the Boulevard Diderot and the green trees where the birds were singing. And Fifine, understanding what was passing in his heart would say to him:

"Be patient. On Sunday we will go into the woods at Vincennes and have such a good time, and I will throw stones for you to bring back to me."

Then Zouzou would bark joyously.

Years passed like this, years of perfect happiness. But happiness is, they say, a bird of passage, who never remains for long in the nest he has chosen.

The workman fell ill, very ill. Clotilde, who adored her husband, would not allow him to be taken to the hospital till the very last moment. One by one, every piece of furniture in the modest little home was sold at a miserable price to second-hand dealers; then the linen, the little trifles, the souvenirs of happy days, everything went, little by little.

And when, after five months in the hospital, Henry was able to return to his home, he found a complete change. Misery had knocked at the door, destroying all happiness, and carrying off all their savings. Zouzou had always had his share, caressed by Clotilde and Fifine; he had often wept with them for the absent one who was now returning convalescent.

"I shall go to work to-morrow," said Henry.

And so the next day he went to see his former employer, who engaged him for the day following. But, alas, the poor fellow had over-estimated his strength, and in a few days he was forced to keep to his bed again.

Three months rent were unpaid, and the landlord threatened pitilessly to turn them out.

"When people are as badly off as you, madam, they do not keep a dog to feed."

"That is true, but he was so unhappy," said Clotilde humbly.

And haughtily, with her head very high, Clotilde ascended the stairs to her apartments. But when she was in her own room she broke into sobs.

"What is it? Why do you cry?" asked her husband.

She related to him what had taken place. Then a bitter smile crossed the lips of the sick man. Seated near the window in an old invalid-chair, which had been saved in case of his illness returning, his limbs trembled under the heavy shawl which covered them; he remained silent for a long time, his eyes fixed on the almost purple sky.

Seated beside him was Zouzou, who looked at him intently, and the man's look was mingled with the tender look of the dog.

Henry's eyes suddenly assumed a coaxing expression; a smile crossed his lips, which were as white as wax. Zouzou, advancing, laid his head across the invalid's knees. Slowly the sick man laid his hand on the animal's head. A nail in the collar pricked him and brought a little cry to his lips.

"This collar is in a bad state," said he to Clotilde. "It hurts poor Zouzou; it just now gave me a scratch. Try to find a key to open the padlock. You shan't be bothered with the old thing any longer, Zouzou."

Then he added:

"It will be a nice little amusement for me to do up your collar and make you beautiful, my old dog."

The next day Clotilde borrowed a collection of keys from a locksmith; the padlock was opened and the collar fell off.

For a few minutes Henry examined it to see exactly what had to be done; he turned it over and over in his hands. The leather was much worn in several places, and through the holes could be seen a dirty white paper.

"Papers," said he; "what can that mean?"

Slowly he tore off the leather, and a roll which had taken the form of Zouzou's collar fell off. From this roll fell ten bills of a thousand francs each. On the paper which had enveloped these bills was written:

"To the charitable person who shall take pity on Zouzou I leave my modest savings."

Zouzou's inheritance made them very happy, and joy has once more returned to their home. Zouzou is the master there; he sits on a chair and eats at the table, patiently waiting until he is served.

Maxim Lauzarre.

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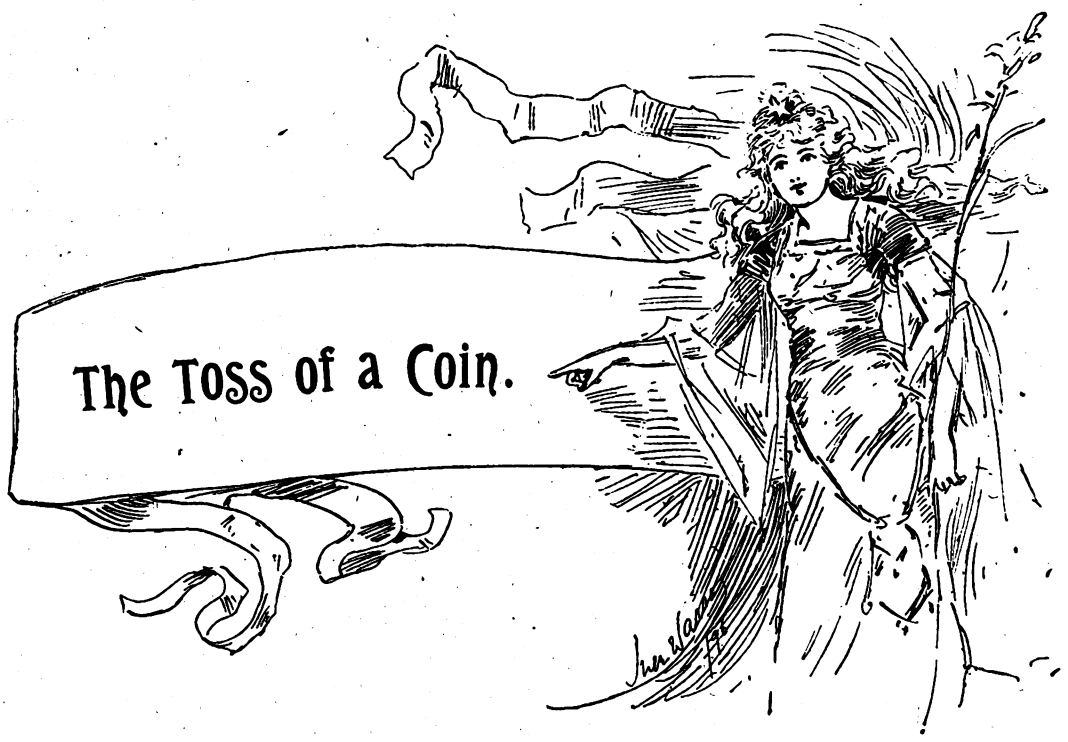

The Toss of a Coin.

"MARIE," I began awkwardly, for I had never proposed before, "you must know—you must have seen for a long time that—that—I love you."

Marie said nothing, but sat looking down at her hands, which were twisting a bit of lace that she called a handkerchief. She was smiling before I began. She now looked distressed.

I do not like to see Marie look distressed, for she then looks as if she were going to cry. And a crying woman is not pretty. So for the minute I laid aside my own affair to comfort Marie.

"Marie," I began, venturing with much trepidation to lay my hand softly upon both of hers, "what's the matter?"

She looked up. Her lips were quivering, and a tear, balanced for the start, stood in each eye.

"I don't know what to do," she whispered brokenly.

"Well?" I said inquiringly, inviting her to continue.

She hesitated nervously for several seconds. Then she went on almost inaudibly.

"You see, Mr. Transome told me last night what you told me just now."

"Confound Transome!" I said to myself; and to Marie: "Well, Philip Transome is a fine fellow, you know."

"Of course," said Marie, acquiescing a little too readily, I thought.

"And he's good looking."

"Yes."

"And rich."

"Yes."

This itemising a rival's good points to comfort the woman you love, is rather straining on one's generosity. It isn't so bad if the woman rewards your generosity, as of course, she should. But Marie didn't. So I stopped.

"Well, where's the trouble, then?" I asked, at length.

"I don't know what to do," she replied, repeating her former wail.

I began to see. It is hard to decide between two lovers. I could sympathise with Marie, for I had once been in a similar predicament myself.

"You don't know which of us to take?" I suggested, after a minute or two of silence, attempting to put some sympathy into my voice.

Marie did not notice the sympathy. She merely looked uncomfortable at this bald statement of the difficulty. But she did not deny it.

"You like me, don't you?" I ventured with some fear in my heart.

Marie nodded. I felt very complacent.

"And you like Philip Transome?" I continued.

She nodded a second time. I believe I swore at Transome again.

"But you can't decide between us. Is that it?"

"That's it," acknowledged Marie weakly.

"You have tried every way?"

"I have, and I can't"—here Marie blushed, but it was a blush I did not like, because it was for Transome as much as it was for me—"and I can't tell which of you I like the better."

The person who sits in the seat of the undecided sits not easily. This I knew. And any decision is better than no decision. This also I knew. So out of the sympathy which I had for Marie I made up my mind to help

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her to arrive at some decision, even though I lost by it. But I did not intend losing if I could help it.

I thought for a long time, but nothing came. Then I looked up at Marie. Her eyes were fixed expectantly on me, as though she had instinctively learnt of my intention to help her and was awaiting my plan.

"Well," said I, seizing on an idea that just then popped into my head, "since you have tried all other ways, suppose you toss up for us?"

"What!" exclaimed Marie, half starting from her chair.

"Toss up for us," I repeated calmly.

Marie shrank back in her chair and gazed at me in amazement.

Marie's surprise at my suggestion angered me somewhat. Of course, I can understand that choosing a husband in such a way may seem a little queer to some girls. But they needn't act as though it were unnatural. Besides, there are worse ways.

"Toss up for you!" Marie managed to gasp out at length.

"Certainly," I replied with some asperity. "Have you anything better to suggest?"

A reluctant "No" came from Marie.

"You'd better toss up, then," I said decisively, drawing a shilling from one of my pockets and offering it to her.

She took it and gazed at it for a long time. I began to grow impatient, for the coin was like any other of its kind, and I could see no reason why she should study it. Then I saw that her look was the look of one who is thinking. Suddenly she raised her head and gazed steadily at me. And then a smile that I liked strangely well slowly came into her eyes.

"No; you do it," she said, returning the coin. "I don't know how."

We both stood up. "Heads, it is Transome; tails, it is I?" I suggested briefly.

Marie nodded.

I balanced the coin on my first finger. I felt sure of the result, for the man never lived who is as lucky as I am. I even began to pity poor Transome. But before this feeling had much opportunity to grow I flipped the shilling whirling into the air, and, as it struck the floor, placed my foot upon it.

I looked at Marie. "Which shall it be?" I asked softly.

"You," she whispered.

I slipped my foot aside and we both stooped. The head of Her Gracious Majesty was uppermost.

It was Transome.

We both straightened up. I looked at Marie and Marie looked at me. She was pale, and I could not have been otherwise. I had risked all on the turn of a coin—and it had turned the wrong way. Without a word, for I was not wise in the ways of women, I walked out of the room, secured my hat in the hall, and started to open the door and go out into the street.

As my hand was turning the knob something touched my arm. I turned and looked round. There stood Marie, with a litttle smile—a little beseeching smile—on her face.

"Dick," she whispered, and then was silent. I still held on to the door nob.

"Dick," this time the smile was still more beseeching—"can't you see? It's—it's you."

I saw, and my hand left the door knob. And in the little excitement that followed I also may have kissed Marie. Such things have happened.

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MERESIA

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

There is no confessor like unto Death!—Longfellow.

Mrs. Aladros was met by a strange doctor, who gave her a brief account of the accident and spoke seriously of José's condition.

"Yours was the only name he mentioned, but if he has any relations they should be sent for at once."

"I know of none," said Meresia; "his parents lived in Madrid, but I cannot say if they are still alive, nor yet tell you their address. I will go to him at once if I may. Will you take me to his room?"

The doctor looked curiously at the pale, beautiful woman. Her face interested him, and he wondered in what relation she stood to Serano. Was it a mere sentimental friendship or something deeper, that had made the dying man call her name repeatedly, in evident anxiety, and stress of mind?

The room of suffering was dimly lighted by candles, for the brightness of electricity hurt José's eyes. He was lying propped up by pillows, with his head bandaged, but that was for a mere cut the doctor had explained to Meresia, his critical condition was due to internal injuries of a most dangerous character.

A second doctor stood by the bed, and looked up as Mrs. Aladros entered, motioning her to advance quietly.

She crept to José's side and took his hand, which lay limply upon the sheet. The coldness of it startled her—it was like the hand of Death.

He turned his head with difficulty and met her eyes.

"Are we alone?" he murmured.

The doctors exchanged glances, and taking the hint, withdrew accordingly.

"Yes, now we are alone," she answered softly in the lowest tones of the golden voice. "Are you in great pain?"

"Yes," he said, "great pain, but it's—it's about those papers. You have locked them away in a safe place?"

"Yes, the key is in my pocket now. They are quite secure."

"I have something more to explain to you," he went on feebly, "before you go to Madrid. I cannot tell you now, for my head is weak. It goes round and round, and aches horribly. I can't move. I think the wheels crushed me, but it is so difficult to remember."

"There is nothing that need worry you," she said gently, as a mother might soothe a fretful child. "I will see to everything, and guard the packet well. We will talk about it when you are better."

He closed his eyes, and murmured something in Spanish.

"You can't understand the papers," he said, and she gathered he was quoting the contents. "They call me their saviour, those poor wretches, the avenger of their assassins. Oh! God! that hell on earth! Do you hear the cries? Aladros has sent him to the upper room, the room of torture and misery! Now the hangman has got hold of him. The screams! the screams! Take me away, for mercy's sake! I thought I should never hear it again, and the sound of the whip cutting through the air! For pity's sake stop it, abominable devils! And the irons have come back too, the red hot irons, and the gag! I can't bear it now, the sight, the sound, the horror, is killing me!"

He rolled over on his side, and great drops of sweat broke out on his forehead.

Meresia tried to comfort him, and the touch of her cool hand calmed his fear, and drove the dream away.

"I thought I was back in the prison," he whispered; "it's weakness, don't leave me, I've no other woman, no one to stay."

His words brought the hot tears to Meresia's eyes, an intense pity stirred in her heart. She forgot her anger against Serano, she remembered only that he was dying and needed her; for a woman that is enough.

The disjointed fragments of his ghastly vision brought up before her all the spectres of the past. Her husband's massive figure loomed through the shadows round the bed, smiling cynically. She gave it one long defiant look, before which it vanished. Surely it was a fitting end that Aladros, the unjust, the merciless, should have died by violence!

As she had listened to the burning truths from Serano's lips, any remorse that reaction stirred in Meresia met a final doom. Triumph, conquest, pride asserted themselves once more. Aladros was dead—she and José had killed Aladros!

He lay for a while without speaking. The doctors came back into the room, looked at him, and went away again. They could do nothing, and Meresia expressed a wish to watch alone.

She forgot the enormity of her sin and his—forgot the bitter suffering, the fear, the unrest, the remorse, the long agonising hours of meditation, the sting left behind, the reproof of conscience.

José lay sleeping now like a little child, and Meresia knelt down and prayed over him. Her prayers were not for deliverance from impending perdition; they were rather the words of one strong in faith, commending a blameless soul to the overwhelming love of a great and merciful God. She seemed to discern—though sin was mighty, death terrible, Satan subtle, and the grave gloomy—a way of escape, an opening out, embodying to her perception, and proving to her satisfaction the reality of those things which the ear cannot hear, nor the eye see.

She knelt as one in adoration, with lips parted, and eyes bright with the fever of her vision; and who shall say that she was wrong; who shall condemn her, or cast the first stone?

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It may be that at the last the great sins will appear small, and the little, selfish, mean, contemptible ones magnify themselves into mountains of ruin to crush the fallen to dust.

The upshot of the whole is that no man can guess, tell, say, or judge, since none have "tasted the powers of the world to come."

As Meresia knelt with face upraised, and hands clasped, the door was pushed gently open, and someone entered the room noiselessly. She neither heard nor moved, but the man started back amazed, and held his breath.

Bad news travels apace; but Herbert Brockbank had not expected to find Meresia with José Serano. His emotions all but overmastered him as he saw her there. He could neither think nor reason, but watched her with a dead, stunned feeling, that came from love, pity, and jealousy together.

He dare not retreat for fear of disturbing the sleeping man, nor could he speak to Meresia, for the whispered words that rose to his throat choked themselves in utterance. So he stood—just where he had entered—clothed in shadow, an unseen spectator of the praying woman and the unconscious man.

A bitterness such as life had never brought to him before rankled now in his soul. A stranger—apart—in the actual presence of the woman he loved with heart and body, mind and spirit, having no right to be near her, no place in her thoughts. He felt a traitor to look, to make her his own in imagination, to lull his pain by picturing her returning the love she had that very day rejected.

There was something of the expression in her face now that he had seen on the first day, when all that was good and strong in him went out to Meresia in silent sympathy—something of the soft sweetness of the spring.

Why had it come back at this awful moment, when one, who, a few hours ago, was full of life, strength, vigour, lay at the point of death, under the sword of the destroying angel?

Herbert Brockbank could not say, nor did he seek to discover, for the room was full of mystery, and nothing could be restricted within the narrow limits of reason.

Presently a low moan came from the pillows. Meresia started up, as one waking from a dream. She bent over José to catch his words.

"Are you there?" he asked.

"Yes, I will stay; don't be afraid, you shall not be left alone."

"I have found out what is going to happen," he continued; "Aunt Harriet came just now and told me. She looked very sad and thin, and as white as when I saw her in her coffin. She said I was going to die."

His voice trembled so that the words were hardly audible, and Meresia could see that his whole body shook under the bed clothes as if from intense cold, or great fear.

"Should you be frightened to die?" she murmured softly.

He groaned aloud.

"You ask me that? You, Meresia Aladros! How can I die in peace with this sin on my soul? God will not let it go unpunished, not such a sin as mine! He turns the wicked into Hell, there is nothing for me but everlasting destruction."

He shivered again, alarmed by a sense of his imminent peril.

"I thought just now," said Meresia, "that I looked into Heaven. It was not the Heaven we had pictured to us in childhood, no golden streets, no angels in white, but, oh! such a great, such a wonderful beauty, yet all divinely human with the Man-God; the Truth, the Life, waiting to pardon those who believed in His Love."

"Listen," said José, "I want to tell you—I—I——"

He paused for breath.

"Yes," she answered.

"I was a Protestant once—then—in Madrid, I changed my faith. I went over to Rome. After that, I lost touch with everything, it all seemed very weak—falling to pieces I let the rules and the services slide. I still believed in God, but I neglected the Saints—the Holy Mother. I doubted, I wavered, I was not a true Catholic. For a whole year I have not confessed; but there may still be time, time to do something, time to confess—I'm frightened. I dare not die without a priest; I must make my last confession. It may go better with me afterwards; it may reconcile the outraged Saints, the neglected Mother of God. I have plenty of money for Masses, they may save me from purgatory's worst pains. Oh! go quickly—quickly—before it is too late!"

His voice rose, he spoke with extraordinary power, and tried to push her from him. Meresia turned to do his bidding, half ran across the room towards the door, and stumbled against Herbert Brockbank with a little cry of terror.

The moment she saw his face her fear subsided. Instinctively she turned to him for advice and help.

"I heard he was ill, and I came at once," said Herbert Brockbank. "I have been here some minutes, but you did not see me."

"Where can we find a priest?" she asked.

"Stay, he is calling you back," said the man, pointing to the bed.

José was beckoning and trying to speak. Herbert Brockbank went quickly to his side, but Serano's eyes had no light of recognition in them. He feebly clutched at Brockbank's sleeve, and poured forth his story in disjointed sentences.

"Father," he gasped, "Father, I have a confession to make!"

"Come away," cried Meresia, a sudden dread seizing her, "he thinks you are the priest!"

"Let him, poor fellow; he is dying, there is no time to send. Let him die in peace."

"Oh! no, no!" gasped Meresia, frantic with terror.

But Herbert Brockbank was bending over José, who continued his speaking with extraordinary strength, the strength that comes at the last to some. "Father, I sinned, I was tempted, I fell! Aladros, Alfonso Aladros—deserved to die, so I thought, so she thought—his wife! His abominable sins were cruelty—injustice—God knows the rest. I have plotted against the State—I have helped the Anarchists in Spain to escape their torment. I gave that woman Meresia poison—poison for Aladros. We killed him, and then I made use of her—I gave her papers to take to Madrid. She was furiously angry—indignant, but I showed no pity. I cowed her with threats like a villain—her—a woman! Then I was brought home ill—injured, and she came—stayed with me—said no word of reproach. If she could forgive me, surely the good God—He must forgive—He will not be outdone by a woman!"

Meresia fell on her knees, and buried her face in her hands. She let her head sink down—down to the very floor in an attitude of abject humiliation! As the whole truth flashed across Herbert Brockbank—his emotions became suddenly subdued and controlled, as is often the case in a great emergency. He realised the meaning of Meresia's distracted protest—the horror of the moment for her—all the agony of mind she had suffered, and was suffering.

José was gazing fixedly at Brockbank, as if waiting to hear his fate.

An unseen power came to Herbert's aid, and guided his actions. Raising his hand he solemnly—reverently made the sign of the cross before the failing eyes of his dying friend. Then he spoke in a voice new and strange:

"My son, thy sins are forgiven thee—rest in peace!"

José's lips parted, he looked with great wonder and awakening happiness into far reaching space. He tried to speak, but the failing breath could make neither sound nor utterance, and into eternal silence he passed from the temporary hush of this present world.

For a moment Brockbank stood over the body of José

Serano, then he turned, and raised Meresia from the ground.

Her face was ashen pale—as white as the face of Serano—her eyes widely opened, looked fearfully from the dead to the living man, as, convicted of her crime, she waited for the worst.

In her helplessness and misery she appeared even more beautiful than when she basked in the smiling light of a spring afternoon. Her appealing expression touched the man to the core, he held her in his arms and felt her trembling, but for his support she must have fallen.

"This is retribution," she said, and the sweetness of her low, passionate voice thrilled his soul. "What shall you do?"

He lifted her face to his own, and looked into it long and searchingly. Her colour came and went under his burning gaze. Self-condemning words broke forth:

"It was true—all true! Put me away! Do you realise what I have done?"

She struggled half-heartedly to free herself from the comforting clasp—that felt as if it were holding her from the world and from judgment.

But the love that was stronger than all these things retained the treasure it had sought—the love before which sin, mistake, nay, crime—red-handed—waned to insignificance!

He wanted the woman just as she was—murderess or angel. This was Meresia—the thing he craved, the being he had seen, and instantly adored—the half of himself which God had placed in the world and withheld until now!

So love conquered with supreme sovereignity, love swept out the dark passages of the past, the bitterness, the gall—love a law unto itself—answered Meresia with the wordless assurance of meeting lips, which pressed her own, and sealed the secret of their lives.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Let All Be Well—Be Well."

It was the day after Serano's death, and Meresia had thought long and earnestly over the fate of José's papers.

The night before, in her excitement, she had half decided to take them to Madrid—to fulfil her mission—but with morning light she saw the folly and danger of this proceeding.

She must consider not only herself, but the true, loyal man who, knowing everything, loved her none the less. Ah! loved her, if possible, more for what she had endured.

Needless to repeat all that passed between them after they left the house of death.

Herbert Brockbank brought her home and listened to the confused story of her life, as in full confidence she eagerly unfolded chapter upon chapter to his wondering ears.

At last she could speak out her whole mind; tell everything to a breathing, living, kindred spirit, who understood her motives and her actions, and could bear to hear them without shrinking, without reproach.

It was like the rushing forth of a pent up river, a sudden outlet and escape from martyrdom and agony—the breaking of the awful silence as the flood-gates of her soul opened, as she took the stranger into the recesses of her heart. So the mutual unburdening of their love must be closed to the merciless eye of the world. Only those who have known love in its strongest form—the love that braves all—meets all fearlessly, and stands like a firm rock amidst the billows of the sea—can picture one half of Meresia's joy as she realised this man's devotion!

Now, in the quietude of her room, she crossed to a desk and unlocked a drawer.

Unhesitatingly she drew the sealed packet, addressed in José's handwriting, from its resting place. What terror this same envelope had once instilled in her brain, and now she was master of it completely; it could no longer unnerve or frighten her!

She gazed at the writing tenderly, for all her thoughts of José, now, were kind. She was grateful to him for his dying confession; glad that he had proved Herbert's love by forcing the knowledge of her crime upon him.

Then, reclosing the drawer, she took the packet in both hands, and crossed to the fire, which burnt brightly as if in defiance of the spring sunshine. Kneeling on the hearthrug, Meresia bent forward and thrust the papers, unopened, into the very heart of the blaze. They writhed defiantly, and as the fire burnt upon them, the writing seemed to rise as if lettered in gold, and the last to fade was the word—Madrid!

"The past is dead!" said Meresia; "thank God! thank God!"

She knelt between the trembling shadows and the sunlight—the shadows full of farewells and mournings for sin—the sun bright as the dawning of a new day, warm and golden, flooding every corner of the room.

The door opened, and Elizabeth announced herself:

"My dear Meresia, what a smell of burning! Old letters?"

"Only some useless papers—documents of no account. You see this little black heap? How unimportant it looks! Once it was thought a good deal of, but now its day is over."

Meresia stirred the charred leaves with the poker, and finally crushed them under the coal.

"I was so shocked to hear the dreadful news this morning," said Elizabeth, "of poor Dr. Serano's accident and death. What a loss he will be!"

"Yes; he was very good to some people."

"And yet," continued Elizabeth, "he leaves no one quite near to mourn him—no wife or child."

"He hadn't time for women," said Meresia; "his family was large and far reaching—he called it Humanity. I wonder if people are really happy who never marry!"

"I am happy," said Elizabeth.

"Are you quite—quite—sure of that? You have put so much away which the world wanted to give—you have mistrusted love?"

"Yes, Meresia. But you married, and were not happy."

"I made my own tragedy, remember. I sowed the clouds and reaped the rain. Now I am going to sow sunshine, and wait for another harvest. Put your arms round me, Elizabeth; hold me very tight; tell me there is such a thing as pure, strong, perfect love, and passion—not of the mere common, earthly kind. The love that is very God, the love that is purity itself, the love that is self-sacrifice—the devotion of a strong man for a weak woman, whose life has been marred by folly and mistake. If I told you I had found all this suddenly—unexpectedly—would you believe me?"

"Yes," replied Elizabeth. "But I should say you had been more fortunate than most women!"

The End.

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"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCY.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address three penny stamps for a copy (post-free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

The following are extracts from other Journals:

GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

It is a matter for congratulation that obesity is taking its proper place as a disease, and is receiving that scientific attention which it has long lacked. It does not follow that a person need to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that anyone can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treating for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principle if it has become at all firmly fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious that there ought to be no difficulty about their acceptance when once they become known; and, as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. It is marvellous how this "Pasteur" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce as much as 14lb. in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book (256 pages) only costs 3d., post free and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really worth reading.—*Southport Visitor.*

CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.

That procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many cases, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That in the majority of cases procrastination is easily curable is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," the remarkable popularity of which is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process —a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method— of banishing their superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly-growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being requisite to ensure comely and comfortable slimness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding three penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury.*

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SHORT TRUTHS.

WANTED BY THE PUBLISHER, any numbers of *Short Stories* published previous to July, 1893. Sixpence each will be given for clean and perfect copies.

G. R.—The proportion of men and women in France is more equal than in any other country in the world, there being 1,007 women to every 1,000 men.

P. P.—It is perfectly true that the Lord Mayor, during his term of office, takes precedence of every subject within the jurisdiction of London. Even the Prince of Wales is not an exception.

ANTI-SMOKER.—Railway companies are compelled to attach smoking-carriages to every train of more than one carriage of each class. The compulsion dates from 1868, and is enjoined by a clause in the Railway Regulations Act of that year.

H. K.—There are twenty-seven Royal families in Europe, two-thirds of which are of German origin.

Q. W. asks: "Which the easiest language to think in?"———Whichever language happens to be the one a man knows best, of course; thus English would be the easiest for an Englishman to think in, French for a Frenchman, German for a German, and so on. However, given a man with a complete knowledge of any number of languages, he would naturally choose the language which has the widest range of vocabulary, and which was capable of expressing the most subtle shades of meaning, and that is English.

D. S. asks: "Which body of dissenters from the established Church of England is best represented in Parliament in proportion to its size?"———The Quakers. There are only 18,000 of them in Great Britian, and they are represented in the House of Commons by eight members.

G. W.—Canada supples about one-fourteenth of the imported food of Great Britain.

J. T. wants to know if there is any advantage derived from the sea containing salt.———Certainly there is. If it were not for the salts of the ocean, the whole sea would become a mere mass of corruption, owing to the decay of the organic matter it contains.

M. C.—In no country is the Government more strict than in Germany. If a foreigner wishes to remain in a town for a few days he must take his passport to the police, with a sixpenny piece; he will then receive a permit-card allowing him to stay for another six months. No German may leave the country unless he can show that he has done the military service required of him, and there is no free Press as we know it.

A. D. G.—Green is the colour most beneficial to the eye in diffused light, and reds and pinks the most harmful. In a strong direct light, however, blue and neutral tints are the best for the eyes, and pure white the most harmful, as is proved by the phenomena snow blindness.

B. A. B.—The "Upper Ten" includes about 14,000 persons.

H. C.—It really does not matter in the least whether you talk of coming "up to London" from Northumberland, or "down to London." As a rule, in every country it is usual to speak of going up to the capital, whether it is situated in the North or South, and that is why people in your part of the world talk of coming "up to London."

W. F. K.—Madame Albani is a Canadian. Her real name was La Jeunesse, and she adopted the professional name of Albani from that of her birthplace, Albany. She is now married to a Mr. Gye.

E. L.—Only the best of the London fire engines can pump 500 gallons a minute, whereas some of the steamers in use in towns like Liverpool and Manchester are equal to 1,500 and 1,800 gallons a minute.

ALPHA.—It is as unusual for a member of the learned societies to use the letters after his name as it is for a man to sign himself "Mr." or "Esquire," unless he is writing on a subject connected with the society's work.

BOB.—It is not at all surprising that your friend looked "huffy," as you call it, when you told him he was looking "seedy." To look "seedy" is to have a shabby exterior, and the best thing for you to do would be to apologise to your friend, and explain to him that what you meant to convey was that he was not looking quite so well in health as usual.

I AM constantly receiving complaints from readers who say that they are occasionally unable to obtain *Short Stories*, for the reason that their newsagent had none left. It should be remembered that most newsagents only lay in sufficient stock to meet their actual orders, and the only safe way to secure a copy is to *order it to be regularly supplied.*

W. A. N. comes along with the question "Which human characteristic do animals most markedly manifest?"———Jealousy. Animals are most sensitive to any preference or favour shown to other animals. I have known a cat sulk for the rest of its days simply because another cat was introduced into the same household. The reason for this strange, persistent jealousy is because the selfish instincts of the lower animals have not been subdued and brought under the controlling influences which shape the moral characters of human beings.

T. W.—A cable's length is one-tenth of a nautical mile (6,080ft.). The longest mile is the Norwegian, which is within a fraction of seven times ours.

G. D.—I do not see that there is anything strange in the fact that if a person fans himself in a room, the temperature of which is higher than that of his body, his temperature will become hotter instead of cooler. The object of a fan is to cause the air to pass over the face and take with it some of the superfluous heat, but if the air that is passed over the face is hotter than the face itself, it is obvious that it would have anything but a cooling effect.

W. B.—The oldest paper in the world is the *Kin Pan* of Pekin. For nearly a thousand years it has been published regularly, first as a monthly, up to the year 1361, when it became a weekly, and for the last ninety years as a daily.

S. R.—Sultana does not mean the wife of a sultan, but is the title given to his mother, sisters, and daughters.

W. P. C. asks: "How is it that froth or foam will form on the top of some liquids and not on others?"———Only diluted liquids will foam. Frothing is not possible with a liquid of pure constitution. Thus pure water and pure alcohol will neither of them foam, but a mixture of water with but 5 per cent. of alcohol will foam strongly. Water impregnated with camphor will foam freely, and a little soap added to water will have the same effect.

O. S.—The little white spots which sometimes appear on the finger nails are due to some subtle action of the blood, upon which all the bones, sinews, muscles, and organs in the body are dependent for nutrition. They sometimes disappear of their own accord; but there is no known cure. In reality, they signify no derangement of the system.

W. E. M.—Yes, there are several varieties of fish that cannot swim. In every instance they are deep-sea dwellers, and crawl about the rocks, using their tails and fins as legs.

R. C.—The only Englishman who ever ruled as Pope was Nicholas Breakspear, who was born about the year 1100 at Langley, near St. Albans. He was unanimously elected for the Papal chair in 1154, and bore the title of Adrian IV.

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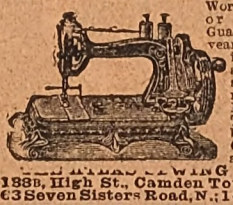

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 477. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 19TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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"Kola is not a food. . . . Kola is not harmless."

—MEDICAL WORLD.

CADBURY's Cocoa is entirely free from all admixtures, such as Kola, Malt, Hops, Alkali, etc., and the Public should insist on having the Pure, Genuine article.

CADBURY's Cocoa is "A Perfect Food."

EXTRACT FROM AN OPINION BY DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E.

(Combe and Gilchrist Lecturer, etc.), expressed by him in a Lecture on Foods:

"I am distinctly of opinion that the modern tendency to add to Cocoa other substances, mostly of a stimulating nature, is a dietetic mistake, a practice to be thoroughly discouraged. **If you have a pure Cocoa you want nothing else in the way of constituting it a food, for it contains in itself all the principles which go to make up a perfect article of diet.** When people begin to add to Cocoa, Hops and Kola and other things, they are interfering with and altering its dietetic value. Cocoa thus treated is not Cocoa but something else, and I have declined for my part, in all my long advocacy of Cocoa as a food to recognise that **anything but pure unadulterated Cocoa can correspond with this definition of a perfect and desirable diet.** I hope the time is not far distant when the public will awaken to a knowledge of the fact that 'doctored' cocoa is not a thing to be recommended or advised as a food."

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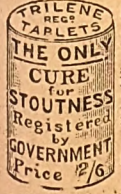

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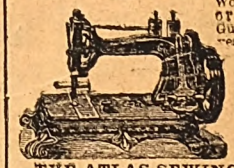

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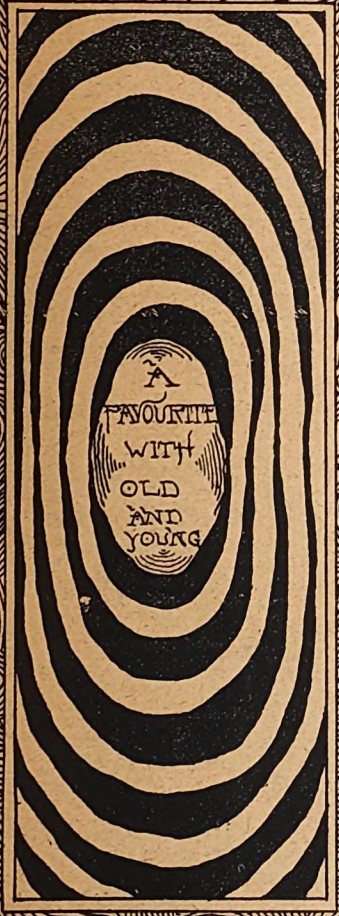
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 477.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending February 19th, 1898.



DAN'S STRATAGEM.

DAN GREGORY might have known he was too happy. As he lowered his paper that morning, extending a hand for the cup of coffee Poppy proffered him, and caught a glance of her pretty white arm—the loose sleeve of the violet morning gown falling back a little—he was about to tell her she was an angel, when the expression of her eye and the sight of a letter tucked to one side of her plate caused him to substitute: "What news?"

"Oh, something nice!" said Poppy, rather too effusively, giving her coffee a vigorous stir and glancing at him askance; "nice for me, and so, dear, nice for you, isn't it?"

"Ahem—yes—of course, pet, well!"

"Even if you never did like Frances so very much," continued Poppy round-aboutly, "now we are married it's different, you know, and—oh, dear!" as a few drops of the whirling coffee flew upon the dainty damask, "how awkward I am!"

"Frances! What of her? Something nice, you said—not dead, surely?"

"Dan, how wicked!" And Poppy gave him as awful a look as her dimpled face could assume. "It's something very nice—she's coming to live with us."

"Not if I know it!"

"What?"

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He was blunt and he was angry. He felt just then as a contented old hen might feel who saw a tom-cat stalking down upon her cosy little nest.

It is said that in every family there is one member who may be termed the family's disease. Of the household of Dan's wife Frances Easton was the malady.

"It's exactly what I might have expected," he continued. "After insulting me from the day she first laid eyes on me, getting up machinations to break off our marriage, and scarcely noticing you since, she would now rake us up when it suits her royal pleasure, like a pair of scissors with which to shape her interests. Great heavens, Poppy, your good nature is maddening!" added Dan, swallowing his coffee with one angry gulp, and catching up his paper.

"I think good nature is needed in this family!" cried Poppy, straightening her short self with an absurd little attempt at dignity, as her trembling hand sent another splash of coffee overboard. "Of course, you need not receive Frances, if you don't want to, but I shall!"

"If I were the only one in the family who detests her," continued Dan, willing to justify himself in Poppy's eyes, "you might have more reason to talk; but there isn't a member, except yourself, who can tolerate her, a house where she hasn't made mischief. Beside," he concluded, with that convincing but time-worn adage, "a man doesn't marry his wife's family."

"He is supposed to be decent to them, however," cried Poppy, her voice shaking.

"Decent? Yes, if they deserve it; if not, no; and to be decent does not necessarily mean to live with them. This isn't Mormon City—one woman for one man is considered enough."

"One too many, I should say," gasped Poppy excitedly, rising with such dispatch that a gew-gaw on her sleeve caught in the handle of the ill-fated coffee cup, overturning it.

"Stop, please!" called Dan, as she hastily pushed aside the *portière* of the door just behind him, "when is this bone of con—when is your sister talking of coming?"

"To-night," she said, tightly clutching the fringe of the curtain.

The *portière* dropped between them with a spirited flirt.

And arrive that night she did, with her big trunks and boxes, her indescribable air of superiority, her pronounced condescensions, her general atmosphere of intolerable impertinence. Without saying a word, she seemed in some inexplicable way to assume control the minute she stepped into the hall.

Dan was never a man to meddle with household matters—an absent-minded fellow, inclined to be easily pleased with his menu—but one morning, frustrated in an effort to effect an entrance into a blackened round of toast, an awakening to the fact that the cooking had been atrocious for the last few days, he cried out rather sharply to Poppy: "What is the matter with the cook?"

"The housemaid is cooking this week," said Poppy sweetly. "I dismissed Hannah."

"Dismissed Hannah," echoed Dan, "why, she lived with mother seventeen years—the best girl she ever had!"

"These old servants always get too fine for their places," said Poppy evasively.

"Too fine? She was good nature itself!"

"She changed," said Poppy busily cutting some bread-and-butter, "she was very impertinent to Frances."

"Ah," said Dan grimly, pushing back his chair, and rising as his sister-in-law indolently trailed the wide fan of her peacock-blue tea-gown into the room, giving a scornful little sniff as she caught sight of the scorched breakfast.

"Poppy," he said one day, extending to her one of those slips of paper known and feared by all benedicts, his forefinger indicating a big figure, "how about this?"

Poppy glanced at it with widening eyes. "What a perfect outrage! What thieves these gas companies are!"

"Not at all," answered Dan. "This house is the headlight of a locomotive from sundown to midnight. It's just one of Frances' many impositions," he continued, his long pent-up feeling coming with a rush. "All our bills are about double. I haven't had a decent meal, an hour of peace, a minute to myself, since she entered the house. What with her infernal airs and graces, and goodness knows what—Poppy, look here"—he was alone.

A week passed without any disagreeable allusions to Frances. Dan was apparently enduring matters with gradually growing contentment, even occasionally surprising Poppy by a light or affable word to her sister.

Frances had gone to the theatre one night, and Dan was enjoying the prospect of an evening alone with Poppy. Poppy had often complained of his complete absorption of the evening papers, but had long since, good-naturedly, accepted the situation. She now sat quietly waiting till the papers should be laid aside. To-night, however, instead of continuing to read, Dan let the journal drop slowly into his lap, and, assuming a preoccupied expression, and torturing a far-away look into his eyes, he gazed silently at the open fire. He saw Poppy glance up from her work, regarding him intently. Finally she said:

"What's the matter, Dan? Business? Anything wrong?"

"N-o-o," answered Dan absently, trying to deepen the expression in his eyes.

Poppy sat silent. She had never, she was thankful to think, seen him look that way before.

"Poppy," he said, at last, "your sister Frances is a splendid-looking girl. Bradwell and I met her to-day at Wilson's, and he admired her style immensely."

Poppy's work fell from her hands. She was looking at him, he knew, in amazement, though his eyes were still upon the fire.

"If one wouldn't mind her temper now she's not so bad; after all, her faults, no doubt, are mostly on the surface; men like variety—sweetness cloys."

"My goodness!" cried Poppy at last, with a little gasp, "what's come over you to-night? You've despised the very ground Frances walked on! I am sure you can't be getting to like her, but it's very queer!"

"It is queer," said Dan, in a sort of deep, impressive voice that made Poppy start and cry again: "My goodness, Dan!" "It is queer," he repeated, bringing his feet from the ottoman down upon the floor, by way of emphasis, and rising, moved uneasily to the mantelpiece where he stood for a moment, absently fumbling with a Dresden match box.

"Do you want to smoke, Dan?" asked Poppy, in an odd little voice. "There are no matches in that, you know; you'll find them where they always are—shall I get you some?"

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"No-o-o," he said, without moving from the mantel. "I don't think I'll smoke to-night, I don't somehow feel like it."

"Not feel like smoking?" queried Poppy at this monstrously improbable assertion.

"The fact is," said Dan, turning at last from the mantelpiece and looking straight at her, while conflicting emotions sent the blood to his face, thus favouring his *rôle* most admirably, "this house does smell, as Frances says, like a 'beastly bar room,' so I think, after this, I'll confine my smoking to the office, dear, and not bother any of you with it."

"Bother me?" she cried quickly, "you know I adore tobacco smoke! This isn't Frances' house, either," she added with spirit, "and you shall do as you choose!"

"I know, dear, but then as Frances is company, we ought to treat her decently, and if tobacco smoke makes her faint——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Poppy, "she lets all the men smoke who come to see her—that's ridiculous!"

Dan sat down.

"Do men come to see her?" he asked in a low tone, staring sullenly at a swirl in the big rug.

"You know as well as I do," replied Poppy tartly, "Frances has plenty of beauty, but she is so sarcastic they all seem afraid of her, and I don't much believe she'll ever marry anybody."

"She not marry?" exclaimed Dan, incredulously. "Bah!"

"What?" cried Poppy, her voice almost shrill.

"Oh, she's too attractive to remain much longer unmarried; though not pretty, her figure is elegant, and she's lots of 'go.' I believe I'll run over to the theatre myself a minute and get our seats for to-morrow night."

"Couldn't you buy them in the morning?" she asked, "it's so lonely here without"—she was going to say "Frances," but substituted "anybody."

"I shan't have a minute to-morrow morning," and hardly kissing her, was off.

It was over an hour before Dan returned. Poppy came running to meet him.

"What in the world kept you so long?" she asked.

"The fact is, I went inside the theatre a few minutes. They told me at the door it would pay to see the crowd, so I made my way round to Frances' box, and we all had quite a jolly time. You look tired, Poppy, and had better go to bed. I'll sit up awhile and read. Frances called after me she had forgotten her latch-key, and asked me to let her in."

"Why on earth didn't you give her yours?" asked Poppy, in a most singular tone of voice.

"It is queer I didn't think of it," he stammered, "but it never occurred to me," as indeed it had not.

"It is strange Frances did not ask you for it herself. It is very unreasonable to expect you to sit up two or three hours for her. These box parties always have a supper afterwards. I should think you would rather go back to the theatre now, it's so near, and take her the key."

"No, thanks," replied Dan, dropping lazily into his great chair by the fire. "I have had enough for one night."

"As you like," she answered coldly, and the next thing he heard was the swish of her silk skirts passing up the stairs.

It was after one o'clock when Frances' aggressive ring—have you ever noticed how characteristic people's rings and knocks are?—sounded through the still house. For two good hours Dan had been sleeping soundly in his chair, much more profoundly than his conscience should have permitted, and, aroused by the sound of the bell, it was several moments before he could remember how he came to be there. Another ring, however, recalled the entire situation, and he hastened to open the door. Frances pushed impatiently past him.

Poppy was in bed the next day with one of her sick headaches, so he took Frances to the theatre in the evening. The day after, happening to meet Frances in the city, and inwardly blessing his good luck, he invited her to dine with him at Wilson's, and it was nearly eight o'clock when they strolled up Holborn together. Poppy stood looking out of the door when they appeared. Her eyes widened, and she grew pale.

"You didn't worry, I hope," said Dan lightly. "We stopped at Wilson's for dinner. You know, our cook isn't first-class just now."

It rained hard that evening, and no company. Dan lingered devotedly round Frances in the music-room, turning her pages, and accompanying her or not as she commanded. Poppy, who did not sing, sat watching them. In like fashion, for some time, events favoured him. As for Frances, she accepted the situation as a matter of course. Demanding all, it did not surprise her in the least that she obtained it.

But the daily increasing insolence of her manner towards Poppy so exasperated Dan that he determined to bring matters to a climax. Like Blue Beard, he resolved to go upon a journey. Like him, too, he made before starting a few preparations. Of a less sinister and sanguinary character, however.

He had no difficulty in securing an opera glove and lace kerchief belonging to Frances, as she daily made known her way through the house by just such trifles. These he tied carefully togother with one of her subtly-scented ribbons, and tucking in a dead rose picked up somewhere, he hid the collection under a heap of papers in a corner of his desk. Then locking the door, and cudgelling his brain, he wrote a crazy bit of poetry, dedicating the erotic trash to Frances. This he placed in another corner of the drawer, locked the desk—hanging the key at the side of it, as he often did—and giving Poppy some adequate reason for his journey, kissed her face carelessly, took up his bag and departed.

He was gone five days. It was late at night when he returned. While fumbling on the front steps for his latch-key, the door opened with a rush. There was a dazzle of golden hair and smiles; a flash of white muslin and arm. It was Poppy! She was tamed.

Dan stepped inside.

"Where is she?" he hastily demanded.

Poppy instantly drew back. She grew very pale.

"Who?" she asked coldly.

"Frances."

"She's gone! She's gone! Frances has gone!" cried Poppy grandly. "I sent her away!"

Her face relaxed—her lip twitched—she fell upon his neck.

"Oh, Dan, Dan!" she sobbed, "I found things in your desk."

When she had calmed down, Dan saw that the time had come for an explanation. There was a few minutes of quiet talk, which restored Poppy's piece of mind.

There is no happier couple in the world than Dan and Poppy now. Frances never visits them.

HAROLD FEARLEY.

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BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

CHAPTER V.

How England Took the News.

On the morning of the duel between *La Gloire* and the *Majestic*, it was rumoured at an early hour in the neighbourhood of Fleet Street that China had dismissed Sir Robert Hart from the Controllership of the Imperial Maritime Customs, and that a Russian was about to be appointed in his stead.

The announcement appeared in the morning papers, and its almost immediate consequence was a rise of threepence per quartern in the price of bread.

But though there were few who were not by this time in a state of excited expectancy, things on their outside wore much their usual appearance. In London the commonplace 'bus and cab went about the streets, and the occasional cyclist, with noiseless glide, manœuvred among them. Perhaps from Holborn and the Strand to the City the 'buses were rather fuller than ordinary; perhaps the cabs moved at a slight increase of pace. The pavements were rather crowded, as much, perhaps, as on a Christmas Eve night, not nearly so much as on a Lord Mayor's day. In back streets the coalmen cried "Coal!" and their faces were black with the grime of the ordinary work-a-day of life.

Yonder, the sun wore his usual broad-faced benignity. He seemed to have no suspicion that on this particular morning the old earth was in her death throes, and a quite new earth in travail to be born.

It was a bright and sunshiny forenoon, the 16th of March, 1899—nine months and fifteen days before the dawn of the twentieth century.

The *Evening News* it was which, in a premature twelve o'clock fifth-edition applied the match to the latent mine of excitement which smouldered in the minds of the people. It declared in a little thunderbolt of breathless news, five lines of "pica" type, that the Stock Exchange had been suddenly closed, and that it was rumoured that the Government was appointing private brokers for the transaction of only such business as might be essential.

A step so decisive, as everyone saw, could only have for its object the prevention of a financial panic which might be disastrous in its results. And for this prevention there must be a cause not as yet generally known.

Yet such a step should have been expected; for hardly any, except the peace-at-any-price party, any longer hoped that war could be averted—though with whom the war was to be, and against what odds, it was not so easy to decide.

At any rate, no one could suppose that the cessions of territory by China to the three Powers were voluntary and spontaneous, as they were, in fact. It was shrewdly suspected that they were the results of a secret understanding arrived at between them and China, at the time when the three had combined to save China from the clutches of Japan, just after the Chino-Japanese war. It had, therefore, the look of a deliberate conspiracy to oust England from her lawful share in an empire, four-fifths of whose commerce was then being carried by British ships; and from end to end of the land, the idea that England should submit tamely to such a conspiracy was scouted with contemptuous indignation.

The severance of telegraphic and telephonic communication, too, between the Continent and England, looked uncommonly like an act of war, whoever was responsible for it. It was reported, and then denied, that three army corps of 120,000 were being mobilised toward Brest. It was known that the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office were in intensely active communication; that there were frequent and hurried meetings of the Cabinet. But still, with that silence which precedes the storm, with that subdued excitement which a trifle will cause to burst into passion, England waited, still faintly hoping against hope to be allowed to go on her way in peace.

The public were in blissful ignorance of the fact that the *Majestic* and *La Gloire* had already been lying four or five hours at the bottom of the Atlantic.

Then came the announcement of the *Evening News*, and the pent-up emotion broke suddenly out. In the City, even before this, the streets had become a mere sea, with

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currents and eddies, of thronging heads. Here the facts of the case were sooner known; when the rumour spread westward, London was awake. All pretence at traffic quickly ceased.

The general tendency and main current of this weltering human ocean was westward in that part of it which was east of Charing Cross, and eastward in that part of it which was west of Charing Cross. The House of Commons, as in all supreme moments of stress and danger, had become the cynosure and the magnet of the nation. Thither the throng pressed.

What was it all about? No one was certain. Was there war—at last?—in very truth? And with whom? No one knew.

For twenty-six years Europe had been practically at peace. The Græco-Turkish war was not a war—it was the bickering of naughty children. The Franco-German war had been grim enough, but it had long since got to be recognised that the next, when it actually came—at last—would hardly resemble it; for the French and German nations had fought, and each still existed an integral nation, in spite of the squabble; but the struggle that was looked forward to when Europe, in the fulness of time, next brought forth her monstrous offspring of war, would, as men knew, be stupendous, world-wide, and final; the combatants would consist of mankind; the whole future of the world would be determined by it; and in the greatness of that day of darkness, war, the destroyer, would itself be destroyed.

This was the logical outcome of the conditions under which Europe, groaning under her weight of armour, waiting, watching, eager to end her foul disease of hatred, had for many years been living.

He reached a comparatively empty by-street.

And now—at last—she was in travail—pang on pang, and shriek on shriek; and her birth-hour was at hand.

But in the London streets the crowd was worthy of the occasion—a crowd without violence, perfectly self-controlled—the meeting of a nation, not a mob. There was a poor old Chinaman with a sore and swollen foot, on the heel of which he used to limp, begging about the City and Holborn. By some chance he became involved in the crowd just opposite the New Law Courts, where it was very thick; he was soon at a loss what to do with his big, bandaged foot without boot. At that moment the name of China was in disfavour. But the old beggar was no sooner seen to be in difficulties than the press opened before him; he hobbled forward; a murmur spread round him—half jeer, half cheer—and a rain of five or six pennies made him blessed. He hobbled through a lane which instantly closed behind him, thanking the gods for war.

The bells of St. Clement Danes burst out, tolling the notes of a slow hymn-tune.

Eastward, in a window of the *Daily News*, there was a big, white sheet of paper, written over in large, blue-pencil letters with the words: "War With Russia."

Westward, in the façade of the National Liberal Club, there was a square, white space exhibited to the public inscribed with the words in charcoal: "War with France and Germany."

"I s'y," said a cockney work-girl in the crowd to her lover, "there's a blooming Frenchman a-looking at the placard. Can't you tell by the squint of him?"

"Oh, don't show him to me, or I'll go straight for him," said Bill; "a Frenchman mykes me sick."

But the girl's remark was heard, and as she passed on a score of eyes were directed toward monsieur. He turned white, finding himself at the mercy of the crowd. But no positive harm was done to him; he was only quietly, but persistently, hustled, till he reached a comparatively empty by-street, dripping with the sweats of fear.

The exhibition of gratuitous notices in windows and at doors was the order of the day. Old habits of stoic silence seemed for the moment to have disappeared—for the moment was ecstatic. Europe, it was felt, had drifted, drifted from the old moorings—into what new seas and latitudes? At Gatti's place in the Strand was written up in huge letters: "Italy to the Rescue!" In the shop window of some foreign faddist in Soho appeared these words: "Russia is the Natural Ally of England"; and in Holborn, at the First Avenue Hotel, which was richly decorated with British and American flags, these words: "One Blood, One Race, One Language."

Those writing advertisements of "Bovril" which infest London, resembling, as letter follows letter, the writing of the mysterious hand on the wall of Belshazzar's palace, were to-day at high noon in full operation. But only the two central letters were now permitted to appear. "V.R." wrote the unseen hand, and again "V.R.," "V.R."

A little ragged street-arab in half-an-hour attained to sudden wealth; he was a newspaper boy, and had in his hand a bundle of three *Stars*, which he found it impossible to sell, since all the news they contained was already ancient history. In a moment of inspiration, Harry Tibble, finding his small body jammed by the crowd against one of the lions in Trafalgar Square, nimbly flung and twisted himself on the pedestal, and solemnly held aloft his bundle of *Stars*. Thousands of eyes turned upon him. After a minute the urchin slowly took from his pocket a match, which he was keeping to light his next cigarette; he struck it on the side of the lion; then, after dexterously shading it with his other hand, which still held the *Stars*, he deliberately applied the flame to the papers. Then, pointing to the ascending mass of smoke and flame, he cried aloud in his shrillest Cockney:

"That's the *French*. So much for *them!*"

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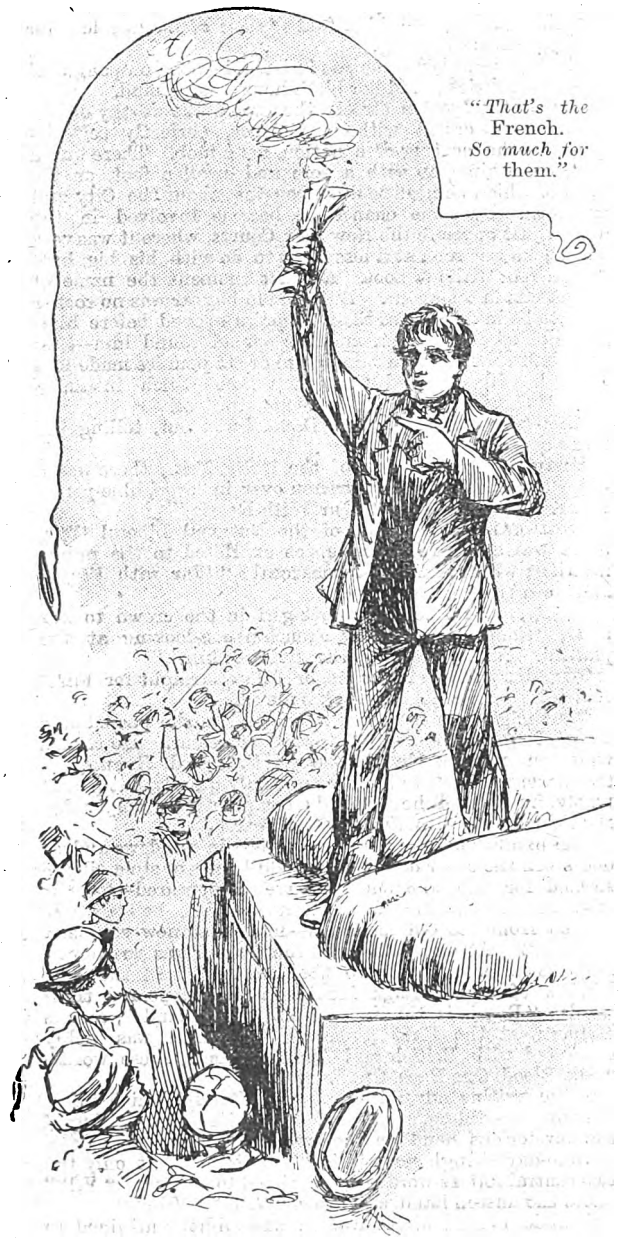

Thereupon he turned, and with head thrown back, pointed upward to the statue of Nelson on top of the column. Harry Tibbles had known what it was to be hooted at, and what it was to be pelted; but never till now had he drawn upon himself such a tumult of noise and such a shower of missiles. His meaning was soon explained to those too far off to hear, and a tremendous shout of cheers at once filled the whole Square, while the urchin was bombarded with a continuous hail of sixpences, pennies, shillings, which came clattering upon the bronze around him by hundreds and thousands, till he could no longer gather them up, or find space in his crammed pockets. When he had been lifted down, and coddled, and coaxed by the laughing crowd, an old gentleman got from him his name and address, and promised to remember him, "if——," but at the word "if" he stopped.

Down by St. Stephen's some cheers were making themselves heard. It was three o'clock—a Thursday. The Members were arriving in crawling carriages, one by one.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor stood up, leaning forward in his cab, bowing on each side, like Royalty. One man shouted: "Strike hard, Tay Pay!" And another: "Don't spare them!" Mr. O'Connor drove out his large, clenched fist, and shook it toward the sky.

The round orb of Mr. Chamberlain's eye-glass was all that could be distinctly made out of him, but behind it, his face seemed Rhadamathine in its sternness, ashen in pallor.

A profound silence of respect, resembling awe, fell upon the people as he passed.

Within the House itself the benches were soon crowded, all but the Treasury and Front Opposition benches. Prayers were read. So far there was no sign of impatience or emotion. There were no "Questions," for there was nobody to answer them; but there was a Tramways Bill for somewhere to be reported, and the House calmly proceeded to the business in hand.

It was a place of stately traditions; the exhibition of emotion had always been foreign to it. Even when the elementary passions of humanity broke through, and swept like a whirlwind within its walls, it had generally known how to comport itself with a dignity impossible to any of the other Senates of the world.

No one, observing its outward aspect during that half-hour, could have dreamt that the nation it had led so long from greatness to greatness stood on the very brink of swift and final ruin.

The Speaker put the question whether the Tramways Bill should be reported. Only two Labour members rose to oppose it. The Speaker said presently:

"I think the Ayes have it."

The thing was done. All eyes were casting furtive glances in the direction of the spot behind the Speaker's chair. At that moment the form of Mr. Balfour was seen advancing slowly toward the Ministerial Bench.

Behind him, in a strange topsy-turvydom of party, was Sir William Harcourt talking to Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Asquith whispering to Mr. Curzon. Others followed. Then it was seen with a thrill, born of the certainty now of calamity, that the Prince of Wales had just quietly walked into the Peers' Gallery, immediately followed by Lords Salisbury and Rosebery, and the Duke of Devonshire. Peering through the gratings of the Strangers' Gallery were Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, the Italian and American Ambassadors, the Duchess of York, and others.

Below, in the body of the Chamber, was not a sound, except a faint scratching of the pen of the Clerk to the House, recording the passage of the Tramways Bill. Yonder, in the Press Gallery, the alert pressmen held pencil or pen ready over their notebooks, eager to record for ever every word of the momentous utterance which they suspected to be coming.

In the spirit of the House was deep commotion; on the surface calm.

Mr. Balfour rose to speak.

His face bore evident traces of some sort of suffering, like that of a man who had passed through the agony of a great ordeal. This was partly due to the want of sleep, which the stress of the last few days had occasioned. Under his eyes were the semicircles of care and fatigue. But, apart from this, the face which he now turned absently round the House before he spoke was changed: the *dilettante* politician, the charming literary *amateur*, the polished English gentleman, the amiable golfer, the *ennuyé* lounger—these familiar phases of his personality were no longer in evidence. A great care sat on his faded cheek, a gravity heavy as the weight of the world's destiny.

Sorrow had transformed the *dilettante* into a great man.

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He made a half turn toward the Speaker, and as he said "Sir," and paused, his neck stiffened with dignity.

"Sir," he repeated, "I need make no apology at the present time for interrupting the ordinary routine of the business of the House. Some adumbration of what I have to say must have already entered the mind of everyone present. And yet, perhaps, not even the most far-seeing and the most prophetic of us may have been able to forecast the gravity of the announcement which it is now my duty to make to this House, and to the people of Britain.

"The recent course of affairs in China is known to all of us, and to all the world. It has not been suggested, even by our enemies, that our policy in that country, either originally or recently, has been an aggressive one. The enterprise of our citizens, indeed, in the ordinary course of commerce, secured for them the greater part of the foreign trade of the land; but with that strong and large bounty of our race, which resembles nothing so much as the free air of heaven and the breadths of the unfettered ocean, we have left it open to every man on the face of the earth to go and do likewise, by engaging in free competition with ourselves. Later on we secured the appointment of an Englishman to the Controllership of the Imperial Maritime Customs in China; in view of the fact that our trade with China amounted to a sum of ten millions sterling annually, this was a step dictated by ordinary caution; but what has been the consequence to other nations? This: that our nominee has impartially distributed all subordinate posts in his gift to French, German, Russian, and Englishman alike, regardless of nationality, regardful only of merit. Such has been our action in the past. With regard to recent events, we know, and our enemies know, that the Government of this country has, in its holy passion for the maintenance of the peace of the world, submitted to affronts, to wrongs, to insults even, which would, weeks ago, have driven any of the less restrained Ministries of continental empires into a declaration of war.

"Even on points where, undoubtedly, many an Englishman would have considered that concession was derogatory to honour, we made concessions. We asked only of Germany that Tientsin should be a free port; of France, that Yunnan should be open to British enterprise; of Russia, that the valley of the Yangtse river should remain neutral country. Without threats, with no exhibition of heat, we claimed these rights.

"The reply of France, of Germany, and of Russia has been a declaration of hostilities.

"Two hours ago their respective Ambassadors placed a notice of war in the hands of the Government."

The House received this announcement with a perfect stillness, in which horror contended with indignation. Mr. Balfour continued:

"It is impossible to doubt that this vast combination of power is the result of a wilful and wicked conspiracy, aimed primarily at the British Empire, but, in the end, against the progress and happiness of the human race. It comes upon us, like a bolt from unclouded skies, at an hour when the nations, recovering from centuries of mutual bloodshed, begin to catch glimpses of the dawn of a better day for the democracies of the world, and are looking forward to the yet fairer fruits of the peace which they enjoy. Sir, the declaration of this war is a blasphemy against mankind, and can proceed only from those mysterious powers of evil which seem ever to stand ready to mar the blessedness of the earth. Away now, for many a day, with the fair aspects of our modern life, the quietude of homes, and the untroubled flow of things. With one thought, at least, every Englishman may console himself, as he goes forth to bear his part in this stupendous struggle: 'Britain is not to blame.' Not to blame—and yet, sir, not all-unprepared to comport herself with high valour, as of old, in this, the greatest crisis of her august history. Nor, is it probable that there lives a single Englishman, who, even in this hour of trial, can doubt that that same Providence which has led our race from small beginnings to the empire of half the earth, will, in its dark purposes, conduct it yet further upon its destiny of triumph and glory."

Mr. Balfour sat down in the midst of a ringing cheer, which burst from every member of the House—English, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh—in a very tempest of loyal passion. The assembly leapt to its feet, and volley on volley of enthusiasm filled the chamber with sound. Frenzy, for the moment, took the place of dignity; and there ensued one of those whirlwind "scenes"—the greatest in the annals of the Second Chamber—which have occurred at intervals. Members bounded wildly from their seats across the breadth of the House with eyes wide in excitement; in the midst of a perfect hullabaloo of noise, John Burns was seen at the Treasury Bench, frantically shaking the hand of Mr. Chamberlain; two Irish members were sobbing in a kind of hysteria on each other's bosom; and Mr. Labouchere, forgetting all his Little-Englandism, was shouting to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who happened to catch his eye: "Russia must be conquered first, and then France—Russia first!"

In the midst of this row and chaos, Sir William Harcourt rose, seeming to wish to speak. A Labour member, who had been speaking at the Speaker's chair to Mr. Gully, rushed away. "Order! Order!" cried the Speaker, rising to his

Sir William Harcourt talking to Mr. Chamberlain.

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feet. Almost instantly the House resumed its quiet, and sat once more stern and impressive. In five minutes it had spent its exuberance. Now it was the Parliament of Britain again.

It was noticed now, with wonder, that Sir William was at the Treasury Bench instead of on the Opposition side. Mr. Balfour, near him, was leaning his head on his hand in a pose of absolute weariness. Sir William said:

"I am asked, sir, to say a few words by the Leader of the House. It was his intention to add a few brief words to what he has already said to the House; but the mental strain put upon him during the last few days has left him in a state of practical collapse. The hon. gentleman has asked me to supply his place. If it should seem strange to any honourable member that the Leader of the Opposition should be asked to supply the place of the Leader of the House, I can only reply that the Opposition now consists solely of Russia, France, and Germany; in this country there is no longer an Opposition. (Loud cheers.) I believe it to be a fact, sir, that if the rulers of the Continental empires had had any kind of conception of the real temper of the nation which they have wantonly and cruelly attacked, they would have paused—they would have hesitated. It is a country hard to conquer, sir—a race hard to quell. At least, it will be a united race and country. Liberal and Radical and Tory shall henceforth lose their titles in the common appellation of Soldier; there shall be no more Orangeman, and no more Parnellite, and no more Healeyite; all these shall merge their names in the common name of Patriot. The moment is great; but Britain is great, too, and equal to the moment. (Prolonged cheering.) I have risen to announce, sir, that the chiefs of the former Opposition have this hour come from a meeting in Downing Street, which we were requested to attend by the Leader of the House with a view to the formation, between us, of a Permanent Committee of Public Safety. I wish also to state that an immediate reduction of the interest on Consols and Government Stock from three to one and a half per cent. is proposed; that a tax on non-professional incomes exceeding £1,000, considerably in excess of the present rate, has been agreed upon; and that the House will be asked to read three times and report to-day—for it is possible that hostilities have already commenced—a Bill granting to the Government a sum of seventy-five million sterling for war expenses."

Some further speeches followed, marked chiefly by a duel between Mr. Labouchere and Mr. John Redmond, as to which should show himself possessed of the most loyally-warlike spirit; and, later on, by a question of Sir Wilfred Lawson, which convulsed the House with laughter, as to whether any additional grog would be served out to the bluejackets on the eve of the first naval engagement. Then, with perfectly business-like calm and grasp of details, the House proceeded to the matter in hand, getting through a mass of work with a celerity which astonished itself. Near six it rose.

Meanwhile, the news had gone like wild-fire through the country; and everywhere it met with the same indignation, scorn, and hard-headed pride. It was not, as Sir William Harcourt had shrewdly said, a particularly easy task which the nations of Europe had undertaken.

England might break; but it was already clear that she was not built of the kind of steel which could be made to bend.

CHAPTER VI.

The Lion Prepares to Spring.

"Invasion" was the word which more frequently than any other rose to the lips of Englishmen.

The muster of French, Russian, and German ships in the Northern seas was eagerly criticised. It was found that their weight of metal was over-poweringly great compared with the small muster of the Channel Squadron. Away out in the China Seas the British fleet had been greatly strengthened; it was cruising in large force in the Mediterranean; it was at the Cape, at Australia, at North America, at the West Indies, in the Pacific; it was not in the English Channel.

Under these conditions the war-like activity in Britain itself went on with feverish intensity. Even before the declarations of war, the Adjutant-General had issued telegraphic orders all over the country for the calling out of the first-class army reserve, and the mobilisation of the militia and volunteers. With wonderous celerity commercial England turned herself into military England. What conscription did for foreign countries, that the manliheod of the race did for us. The women of England, especially, exhibited a spirit as war-like as the peril of their country was immense; and banishing fears, and tears, they put on the sternly proud brows of those heroic old Roman matrons, who laughed with glee when their sons were borne home dead to them with all their wounds in front. "Go along, boy, and give it 'em 'ot this time!" said a Clerkenwell mother, handing his rifle to her son. "And don't be a-sparing o' thot sword o' thoine, Jock," was the admonition of a Lancashire wife as her husband, in premature haste, set out, like many another, to flock to his regimental centre, even before receiving the official intimation that his presence was requisitioned. "And you'll give them a good taste of what Devon men are like, won't you, Steve?" was the exhortation of a Bideford lass.

The little trago-comedy in a West-end drawing-room, when a Royal Naval Artillery Volunteer, who in quiet days was a bank-manager, asked for a kiss of the girl he loved, was repeated in perhaps ten thousand homes.

Till now, so high was the girl above him, he had never dared to ask; but at his request she forgot to blush.

"One kiss," she answered, "for every one of the enemy that you have slain—when you return victorious."

"And if I never return?"

"Then—then—I love you, and I will be proud of you, for my own, and, above all, for England's sake."

This was the mood—heroic, nothing less. Night and day the regimental districts and all military centres were hard at work, calling rolls, drafting troops to their regiments, and making all necessary preparations. A sound of trumpets blown for war re-echoed through the land.

On the night of the announcement in the House of Commons of the declaration of hostilities, at about ten o'clock, suddenly, on the east balcony of Buckingham Palace, the Queen appeared.

It had been supposed that she was still at Windsor, and by what contrivances she had managed to appear here without attracting attention in her passage through London was unknown. It was just as if she had fallen from the sky; and to the crowds with which the streets were packed, thirsting, as they were, for some outward symbol of the might of England to which they could vent their intolerable emotions of love and loyalty, she appeared like a godsend dropped from Heaven.

One involuntary far-reaching shout of joy and triumph, spreading by contagion far up Piccadilly, far along Pall Mall, and re-echoed in thousand-fold acclamations, even by those who could not see her, burst instantly forth. A strong limelight or electric-light arrangement had been hurriedly contrived, which focussed a powerful beam of white concentrated luminosity around her, and shot out in shimmering rays far out and down through the starlit night. Grouped around her was a party of the Royal family. On the right, the Prince of Wales; on her left, Lord Salisbury. In her hand she held aloft an object, the significence of which the crowd for a moment or two failed to grasp. When it did, the enthusiasm intensified beyond all bounds. It was one of the faded and ragged old flags, brought that afternoon from St. Paul's, which had served as ensigns in Wellington's Peninsular campaign, and at Waterloo.

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A scene similarly striking was witnessed at Portsmouth four hours previously, where some seven thousand blue-jackets, and the marines from Gosport, were on parade, and were being reviewed by the Princess May. Hither she had hurried after witnessing the scene in the House, and by the side of her sailor-husband, and Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, rode from end to end of the improvised ranks. Prince George addressed the men with a message of confidence from the Queen, and hinted at the awful odds which they would probably soon be called upon to face. He, and everyone, in fact, were conscious that he was talking to doomed men—that he was saluting the dying.

Then the Princess dismounted. She had in her hand a basket, which she opened, and from it took a strip of blue ribbon. A high flush of ardour mantled on her face as she attached it to the bosom of a staff-captain near her. A touch of pathos and tenderness was added to the ceremony through which she now deftly went by the fact that she had only just recovered from a severe attack of fever, and was looking terribly pale and thin. To every officer, from fleet-captain and commodore to sub-lieutenant and cadet, she attached the little symbol of affection. So sadly solemn was the ceremony that even the on-looking crowd was silent. Many wept. It was her salute to the dying.

But even during the progress of this scene, one of a number of picket-boats which had been sent out from Portsmouth during the day was steaming into the harbour, big with news.

She and two companions (smart little steam-pinnaces which flitted through water like fish) had, earlier in the day, spied a fleet of *cuirassés, canonnières, croiseurs,* and *bâtiments de transport* about S. by E. from Newhaven, forty miles out. They were mostly French, but there were some German also.

The three look-out boats, at intervals of a few minutes, came panting into Portsmouth harbour, like fluttered birds, with the news. Each contained five men, and the fifteen, almost at the same time, stood grouped round the Commander-in-Chief near the Quay.

"Could you make out what ships they were?" he asked.

"We were rather too far off for that, sir," answered a sub. near him.

Then there was silence for half a minute.

It was broken by a voice which said:

"The *Amiral Baudin* is among them, sir, the *Sadowa*, the *Jean Bart*, the *Kaiserhof* and the *Deutschland*."

Sir Michael Culme-Seymour turned and looked at the speaker, his eyebrows lifting a little. He did not know him.

Then, after a minute's deliberation, the Admiral said:

"How many ships all told?"

"There are about seventeen battleships, sir," answered a middy eagerly, "about twenty to twenty-three cruisers, and a large fleet of liners—Messageries Maritimes, and Norddeutscher Lloyd—with an indefinite number of gun and torpedo boats, tenders, and nondescript small craft.

"Don't be a-sparing o' that sword o' thoine, Jock."

They are making for Bognor, Littlehampton, or perhaps Worthing in a quadruple line of a good twenty or thirty cables interval."

"There can hardly be *seventeen* battleships," said the Admiral musingly. "Do *you* confirm that?"

He turned suddenly as he asked to the unknown person who had addressed him before—a mere stripling with a face highly flushed with excitement.

"Well—not quite, sir," the young man replied; "I decided that there were fourteen battleships, twenty-four cruisers, thirty-eight troopships and liners, and a flotilla of 104 small fry."

"You seem pretty certain of your figures?" the Admiral said with a smile.

"Middlingly certain, sir."

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"May I ask—who are you?"

"My name is John Hardy, sir."

"And your ship?"

"The *Powerful*, sir."

"Then, what on earth are you doing here?"

The *Powerful* at that moment was away out in the Yellow Sea, whither she had been sent since the beginning of the previous year.

"Looking about, sir," replied the young man, dropping his light-blue eyes.

"But why are you not in China?"

"I fell very ill just as my ship was going to sail, sir," and as he said it, he gave one of those peculiar half-secret coughs, so indicative of the consumptive chest.

"I see. Well—but how came you to be in the *Jupiter's* picket-boat?"

"I was on the *Jupiter* as a middy before joining the *Powerful*, sir. Captain MacLeod knows me, and has been kindly pleased to notice me. I am a bird without a roost. I came down from London, hoping for some of the fun down here. Captain MacLeod allowed me to take ——"

"Ah, that explains it then. Well, he seems to have done well."

The Commander-in-Chief bestowed upon him a smile of passing approval and patronage, and turned away. In a moment he had forgotten the young seaman; but when a few minutes later, he was reading a telegram from the Chief Coastguardsman at Worthing, giving the sighted ships of the enemy, number for number, as Hardy had given them, then he thought once more of John Hardy.

"Extraordinary genius for facts," he murmured.

The Admiral knew that the picket-boats must, in order to avoid being blown out of the water, have reconnoitred the advancing fleet at such a distance as to be themselves invisible, or nearly so, to the enemy. There could be no doubt that John Hardy's girlish-looking, azure-blue eyes, with the long lashes, possessed the faculty *of seeing*.

It often happened that people who came into contact with this young sailor thought of him again at unexpected moments, as the Admiral now did.

In a previous chapter we said that Dr. Yen How, sitting in a London 'bus on a certain night, was *perhaps* the most important person in the world. We should have stated the fact absolutely, without using the word "perhaps," if it were not that we were thinking of this particular sub-lieutenant, John Hardy.

They two—the little Chinese doctor and this consumptive English lad—held in their hands the destinies of the world.

Each had his own idea of the shape which the future of the human race should take; each was determined that it should take the shape which *he* chose, and no other; and each was immensely strong.

It was fated that these two should meet—soon—and more than once.

It was now six o'clock, and the bluejackets had already passed in a swarm of hurrying boats to their respective ships. As the telegrams arrived from the coastguardsman on the south-east coast, the information they contained was transmitted by semaphore to the fleet. The *Magnificent* under Rear-Admiral John Fellowes, was the flagship of the second in command of the Channel Squadron, and now, in the absence of the *Majestic*, became the flagship of the fleet.

At the Horse Guards, meanwhile, Lord Wolseley was receiving and sending message after message, both telephonic and telegraphic, relating to the dispatch of troops from Aldershot, Victoria, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction to the South. Every ten minutes a Brighton and South Coast train, packed with over a thousand regulars and volunteers carrying a day's cooked rations, dashed forth under forced pressure from each of these stations. Away in hasty flight swept the long strings of bristling carriages, the throttle-valves shrieking the dragon-cry of defiance and challenge which England sent out in answer to her overweening foes.

By seven o'clock fifteen thousand men were massed upon Brighton, and an unaccustomed rattle of some ninety limbers sent thrills of very unusual dismay through the ordinarily placid *bourgeoisie* of London-by-the-Sea. War, so long a word and a myth, had suddenly become a thing, real enough, near enough.

Long files of private carriages, taking away mostly women and children, wended northward upon the Brighton road, while a great crowd filled the steep street leading up to the station, to watch the ever-new batch of arrivals which detrained at all the platforms, up and down alike, and at sidings, the empties being returned along the up and down lines according to convenience. By eight o'clock thirty thousand troops with one hundred and ten guns, under Sir Evelyn Wood, were concentrated, and waiting for the enemy; and all through the night the number was being rapidly increased.

But they waited in vain.

England had been several times invaded previously. The last occasion was in the year 1066, and that occasion Providence intended to be the last for ever. England had since then nursed and reared a race as proud and firm as the foot with which she spurred the breakers raving round her inviolate shores.

At one bell in the second dog-watch the signal was given from the flag-ship—the Channel Squadron, in a double line, at intervals of six cables, and under forced draught, was to steam down Spithead for the Channel, the *Magnificent*, like the bell-wether of a flock, leading one line, the *Prince George* the other.

At that moment John Hardy had just skipped up from the look-out pinnace, which he had been permitted to command, on to the deck of the *Jupiter*.

His heart misgave him, he shrunk within himself, he slunk guiltily. He knew that he had only to be noticed to be turned peremptorily away. He was merely a visitor, a guest—a privileged one, it is true, but still an outsider. That he should dream of taking part in the coming fight was preposterous, the more so as every man knew beforehand that all were going to certain death. And he had no shadow of *status* in any ship present.

But he wanted desperately to see the row; and his mind was one of those dominant ones not very subject to considerations of routine. Once, when a "chief-captain" of cadets on the *Britannia*, with no further temptation to dissoluteness than his weekly two-and-sixpence of pocket-money, he had been reported to the Admiralty for "unsatisfactory conduct"; another such report, and he would have bidden farewell to the British Navy for ever. It was that same gipsy attitude of mind, that sort of devil-may-care lawlessness characteristic of him, which was working in him now, as he stood sulkily there, abaft the after funnel. He felt like being shut out and banished—and he wanted to see the row. He thought of skedaddling and hiding till the ship was well out from land.

But there seemed a suspicion of meanness in this contrivance; and even while he hesitated, Captain Angus MacLeod sighted him.

The Captain had been an intimate friend of Hardy's father, and was an executor of the very large real and personal fortune of which the boy was the heir. Hardy now, at the age of nearly nineteen, was an orphan. The family was Hampshire. The country-house in which he had chiefly passed his earlier boyhood lies fifteen miles south of Andover.

The Captain beckoned. John Hardy ran and stood before him on the hurricane-deck with downcast eyes, and cheeks blushing like a girl's. By nature he was extremely bashful, shyer than an Alpine kid.

"You here?" said the Captain with a deep seriousness in his tone.

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"As you see, sir," answered John with a faint attempt at a smile, and a nervous shifting of a leg.

"You know as well as I do, John," said the Captain sternly, "that this is only a piece of insolence on your part."

"If it strikes you in that light, sir—of course—but I should take it very kindly of you, if you could see your way to let me be in for the trouble."

"In for the trouble? This is a most unprecedented piece of cheek, John Hardy! Be good enough to get ashore, sir. Do you imagine that I am going to have your blood on my hands, then?"

"Whose blood, sir?"

"*Your* blood, sir!"

"My blood is all right, sir," said John sulkily.

"Come, come, are you sane? Can't you see that we are all going to pretty certain death, boy?"

"I can't think that, sir."

"Not? Aren't French and German cannon as good as English, then?"

"They may be on land, sir; but hardly, I think, on Her Majesty's seas."

At these words, "Her Majesty's seas," back went the Captain's head in one sudden cry of gleeful laughter. Her Majesty's seas! Perhaps there was not one living man English enough, and audacious enough, to invent that phrase, except this particular sub-lieutenant standing bashfully there.

But he, on his part, saw nothing extraordinary in the phrase—it slipped from him quite simply and naturally, an offspring of his quietly supercilious habit of mind.

The Captain's face settled soon again to gravity. This was no laughing matter.

"But we are wasting time, John Hardy," he said severely. "Will you be good enough, *now*, to leave my ship?"

"In what, sir?"

"In—in—what did you come in?"

"In the picket-boat, sir."

The Captain turned his face from side to side, puzzled and irritated. John, seeing entreaty useless, was adopting tactics.

"You shan't stay here, sir—that is certain," cried the Captain. "Somehow or other—you go! Get the dinghy."

"Shall I scull her ashore, sir?"

"Yes."

"And who will bring her back, sir?"

"I don't care! Take two blue-jackets, then."

"Isn't it rather late, sir?"

"How?"

"I fancy the ship is already moving rapidly through the water, sir."

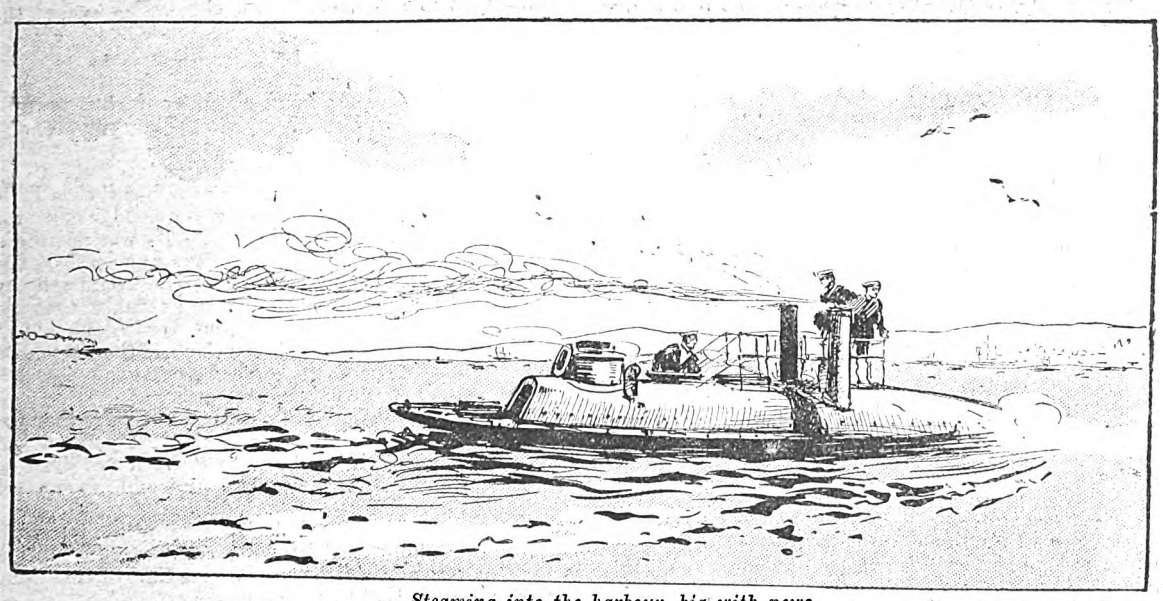
The Captain started.

"Boy, boy," he muttered under his breath. He loved the lad, and had loved his father.

But the Captain was just now extremely busy. He tossed his head and walked rapidly away. The strength and tenacity of John Hardy's will sometimes produced results which had the look of fate and inevitableness.

And so it happened that he was with the Channel Squadron, borne in the *Jupiter*, when it steamed at thirteen knots past Selsey Bill to meet the fleet of the Allies.

(*To be continued.*)



Steaming into the harbour, big with news.

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Holding Up the Winnemucca Stage-Coach.

Owyhoe Joe had been a daring driver of the coach in the old days of the "West" before the great Pacific Railway stretched out its long arms and absorbed the sage brush plains of Idaho, the pine forests of Oregon, and even the lava beds of Northern California. He was now employed as hall-porter at one of the buildings in London. Many thrilling stories he had to tell of his drives on the coach, laden with the golden dust, the mails, and "prospectuses," and I used to be glad when he dropped into my office—provided I was not very busy—and told me the story of some adventure.

One day, when he was talking disjointedly about the old times, I interrupted him with this remark:

"And how about the time when you were relieved of your bags without even an 'if you please'?"

A shade of annoyance and chagrin passed over his bronze face and he shifted uneasily in his chair.

"It was a hotter day nor this out there on the *Mesa* when that young chap stepped out from behind a little clump of grease-wood and as'd me perlite enuf ter throw up my hands. No argument in the face of that there shootin' iron. He took over four thousand clean dust and made for Salt Lake on the back of the best leader. Never heard tell how we caught him? No?" I shook my head.

"Well, ye see I took my wheel-hoss and made for Boise. Found Bill McConnell, Colonel Robbins, Jim Agnew, an' Hank Fisher. We made a bee line 'cross country to head him off. Changed hosses three times. We struck his trail, found that his hoss had broke down an' he'd stolen another. That stolen hoss meant a necktie party.

"In twenty-four hours we came in sight of him. Hoss played out. Game up. Nothin' but sand and sage brush fur miles except one lone tree. Kinder placed there by providence, McConnell said. Thar thet young fellow set—one leg over the horn of his saddle. Fine looker. Stood six in his stockings. I knew him the minute I set eyes on him. He knew me but never twigged. Bill McConnell war ahead, an' he opened the meetin' without singin'.'

"'Good mornin' stranger.'

"'Good mornin'.'

"'Seen anything of a man about your size straddle of a sorrel mare lookin' a heap like the one you ride?'

"'No. I haven't.'

"'That's a purty good mare o' yourn.'

"'Yes, she was worth a cool 500dol. but she's a little winded now; say, mister, I'll give you 500dol. clear for that one o' yourn and stop the deal.' He was making a good bluff. Hoss stealin' in them days war death on the spot. He knew we war on to him. His offer would well pay for the broken down hoss, an' he war thinkin' that his money would pull him through, but yer see he didn't know McConnell. Mac had been Cap'n of the Vigilants back in '63 up in the Basin and had a name to keep good. He just smiled at the man's innocence.

"'That's a straight blind o' yourn, but we're thar an' hold you over. You look a leetle mite played out as well as yer mare. If you'll jest get down an' jine our little party it'll stretch yer legs, and mebbe ye need stretchin' all over.'

"He got a little white, but slid down without a word. We followed suit, and Agnew threw over his head a noose, an' passin' the other end over a limb of that lone old tree, nodded that things war ready.

"That young fellow war game ter the last. Never moved a muscle. Seemed kinder like a big shame. McConnell went up to him and said:

"'Now, pard, is everything all right?'

"'All right.'

"'Have ye anything to say why this 'er little picnic shouldn't proceed?'

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"'Nothin'.'

"'Have ye got any word ter leave to yer friends? If ye have make it short, fur we're goin' to break camp inside er ten minutes.'

"That young feller took his eyes off a bit of sage brush fur the first time and looked us straight in the eyes. His eyes war blue. I took notice of that, and his face war clean and kind of pure lookin.' He did not seem to be takin' much intere t in what war goin' on round him. Kinder had a far away, talkin'-ter-the-angels look. Made me feel as though I didn't count no-how. Kept thinkin' of some things I learnt in Sunday school in Missouri when I warn't bigger nor that basket o' papers. Then he came to, and drawin' a crumpled letter from his pocket spoke with a kinder tremble in his voice.

"'Perhaps you are a better scholar nor I be. If you'll jest read that an' be kind enuf to answer it. I'll tell yer what ter say.'

"McConnell had already passed the coil of rope to Jim Agnew and he had drawn it taut. He took the letter, an' as we hung round kinder curious like, he opened it and ready out loud:

"Etowah, Ga., Jan 18, 1874.

"My Dear Son James,—For long weary months I have waited for news from you since your last dear letter to your old mother. God bless you, James, and answer my prayers that this letter may reach you, thanking you for your ever thoughtful care of me in my old age. But once more to look into your dear face and feel that my baby boy was near me would cheer my old heart more than to possess all the gold in the Idaho. When are you coming home? You promised me that in the spring you would come back to me. May the good God watch over and prosper you and return my dear boy to my old arms before I die.—From your loving

"Mother."

Owyhoe Joe paused and looked vacantly up at the ceiling. I waited in silence.

"That letter did the business.

"McConnell had had a good edication, and he commenced in a clear, strong voice, but afore the closing words war out, it war all we could do ter hear his voice. Yes, sir, an' my eyes got weaker nor a sick child's. Fact! The rope slackened until it fell from the hands of Jim Agnew, and as the breath of the mornin' came a' rushin' through the leaves of that old tree, and long shafts o' sunlight kinder prospected down through the opening boughs, someway, my old throat caved in like, an' I went ter thinkin' o' long sunny days on the banks of the Missouri, of my old dorg, an' uv a little sister with eyes jest like this young fellar's, an' of my old mammy, an' how she taught me to pray.

"Couldn't help it, but borrowin' a hoss an' robbin' a stage didn't seem a big enough thing to string that boy up fer, an' break his old mother's heart. Guess McConnell war thinkin' o' the same way, fer he kind of reverently liked folded up that soiled bit o' paper and handed it to his owner, an' without a word slipped the noose from his neck, an' then, in tones as gentle as a mother's, asked:

"'War ye goin' home, stranger?'

"'Yes!'

"'Good-bye!'

"The boy didn't dare trust his voice in thanks. I knew how he felt, but he drew from his belt a small bag of notes an' offered it to Mac.

"'Hoss!'

"'No, take her an' good-bye.'

"He mounted the mare, while we sat an' watched him out o' sight, an' then, like a pack o' starved coyotes, turned and silently sneaked fer Boise.

"Court was adjourned, verdic' sat aside," he concluded, while I leant back, my mind filled with the dramatic rehearsal.

We sat thus for a few seconds; then Joe rose slowly, said "good-day" in a quiet voice, and left me alone with my thoughts.

Oswald Bremen.

SHALL WE MAKE A MINIATURE FOR YOU?

With the enterprise born of repeated success, *Pearson's Weekly* makes an extraordinary offer to the whole of its readers for a limited time only. We will send a beautiful little miniature (about 2¼-inches by 1⅞-inches) in exquisite colouring, and completely framed in a dainty gold-plated oval frame, of any single portrait readers like to forward.

All you have to do is to send your photograph, together with the coupon, and seven shillings and sixpence. The miniatures may be also had in chased gold ornamental frames, the total cost being 10s. 6d.

Of course, the better the photograph you send, the better will be the reproduction.

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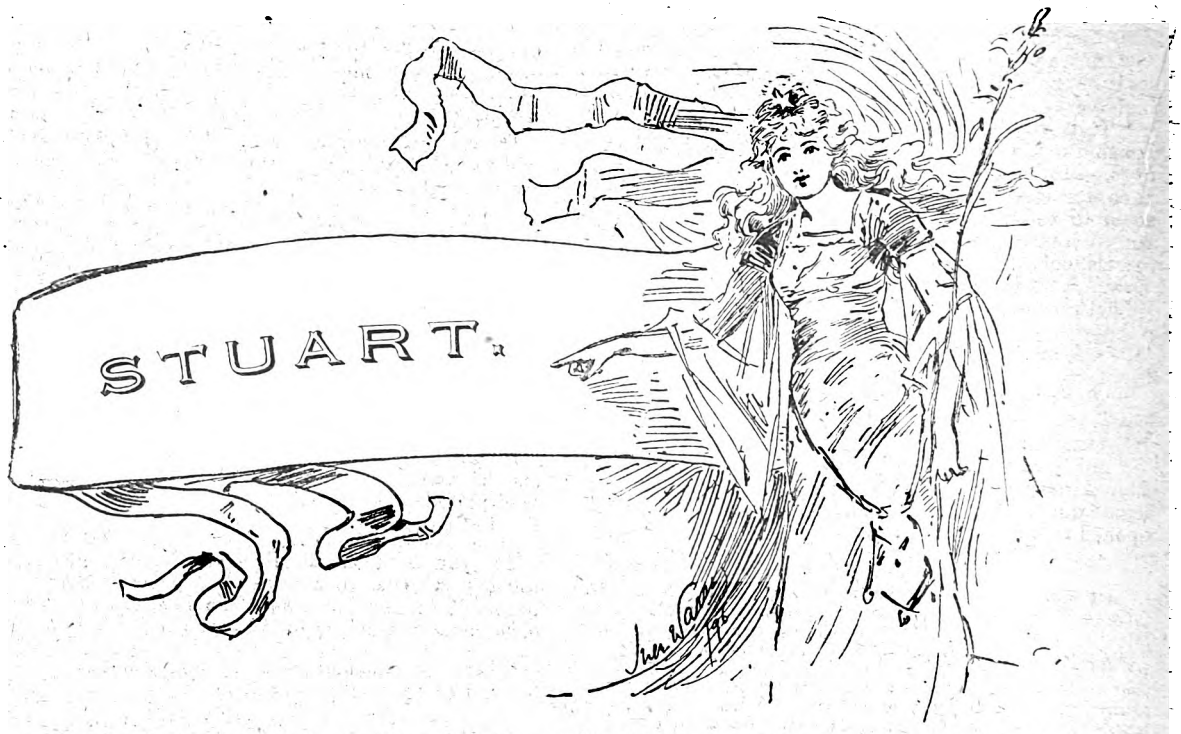

There is a time in the affairs of every literary hack when the world doesn't seem so full of that promise his day dreams once pictured it; when the sun itself seems to shed its rays on every wight but him, and the eye of every man to look at him askew as one who has failed to find his footing on the lowly rung which leads up the ladder of success.

My inevitable hour had come, and I was passing through its experimental phases; knew, for instance, what it was to feel an appetite which had no earthly business to recur at forbidden hours, and had become familiar with the dark looks of a suspicious landlady, whose bills were wont to appear with solar regularity. These are days when the fickle Muse withholds that modicum of her patronage which keeps the literary soul and body from divorce, and the quill is only too willing for its work, were the ideas not too prone to tarry in their coming. I was paying my debt to experience, and trying to drive home the hard reasoning of its arguments to a mind that was none too wise.

The artist who toils by noontide, and the literary man who trims the midnight lamp, generally set up their household gods in Chelsea, and are the owls of its embankment. They come out to walk by starlight, an Indian file of lonely peripatetics, or smoke a peace-pipe on its benches. So used I, and have built many an artistic, if impossible, fabric in the air by the Chelsea Thames.

Here, one keen November night, I met young Stuart. By some good fortune, I wore an overcoat, and by some fortuitious acceptance of copy, my 'baccy pouch was full and fat, and I was smoking as bravely as though I had rescued from a watery grave the genius of the tobacco shop I used, and, in return, possessed a life-claim upon the treasures of his stock.

Seated on a bench, I became idly conscious of a youth who was scribbling by the light of the lamp at our back in the relic of a decent note-book sadly worn and shoddy. It was a dry cold night with a sharp bite of frost nipping the flesh, but, all unconscious of it, with an acute, interesting face bent upon the script, the boy went on putting his thoughts ascroll.

I had seen him before—this spare-clad, ill-shod bit of mystery, and was moved to a great curiosity. So when he put his book away and looking up caught my look of interest with a half smile, I ventured to ask if it were not cold writing.

"Cold?" he replied with a quick smile, "it is cold enough, but I do not mind the cold now."

He turned a pair of luminous eyes upon me whose dark circles told their history of a hard lot, and the thought pained me to the quick.

"Tell me, what were you writing?"

"Writing? Well——" He paused and looked at his boots which were broken-laced and worn, "well, I sometimes put my thoughts on paper, and am sometimes paid for them, but oftener not."

"You live by writing, then?"

"No, hardly live;" and he put his hands in his pocket and shivered ever so slightly.

I told him that I, too, was by way of being a votary of the uncertain goddess, and this put us on good terms with one another. We were brothers of a trade.

"Tell me," I said, "how old are you?"

"Seventeen;" he hardly looked fifteen; "and you?"

"I am much older—I am twenty-five. And what is your name, may I ask?"

"My name is Stuart—Charles Stuart."

"An historic one; mine is Fraser. Let us be friends, shall we?"

"Yes, I should much like to. I have no friend."

Then I asked him why he wrote outside and in the cold. He paused in some confusion before replying.

"But why," he said suddenly, "should I be ashamed

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to tell you? The truth is I had no light to write by in my room and came out here, as I often do. Sad, is it not?" and he laughed.

I swallowed an ugly lump in my throat, but the effort brought tears to my eyes.

And then he told me with unaffected candour that his was a bitter struggle, and that he didn't by any means make ends meet. His father had held a commission in the Guards. An accident with the Pytchely Hounds had put an end to his career, or a provision might have been made for him. From his infancy he had been entrusted to a lady, of whom he spoke warmly and affectionately as his governess. She died when he was eleven, and to get rid of him, he supposed, they sent him to a boys' home. This he ran away from as they wanted to send him soldiering, and his tastes and education were much above it, for his governess was very clever.

And his mother?

Even by lamplight I could see the lad flush. His mother was alive, he thought. She came to see him once when he was a child, but took no interest in him. He used to dream of her as a boy, and thought her very lovely but very cold. There was the shade of a sinister doubt somewhere.

"But, surely," I said, "your mother ——"

"My mother was on the stage, I think," he interrupted quietly.

And then it occurred to me that the world was very heartless and very cruel.

* * * * *

We met regularly after that.

He was always dressed in the same clothes, which even gaslight would tell, were very shabby and fast running to shine, and wore the same old boots, which somehow loved to show their ugly scars and easy frailty.

The companionship, however, had brought a little colour and warmth to his life, and he seemed less careworn. But then the hard, ruthless snow came and spoilt it all. Still he would always appear at the same hour, and vowed the snow was paradise to being alone.

"But," I said, "you will catch cold—you are not strong."

"Cold? Never!" he would reply, with his happy smile. "I am used to being cold. You won't let that keep you from coming out, will you? I feel so terribly miserable and lonely by myself." And he extracted the promise.

Then we would talk of anything and everything. We might discuss a dozen subjects, and on every one of them he had some new idea or novel theory that surprised and puzzled me. Of his own work he never spoke.

But one night he had an ugly cough, and though he did not seem to mind it, I did, and reviled my ill-luck for not being able to do something for him.

The next night he wore a thin, shabby little woollen scarf for the first time—the cough became violent and convulsive, a harsh cough, with a keen whoop in its hollow note. It was more than I could bear, and though I knew him to be sensitive in these things, I brought him to a standstill under the light of a lamp.

"Look here, Stuart, my dear fellow, you must know I would not offend you for worlds. Well, I've got another overcoat at home I wish you would wear, and then you must get a pair of boots. Look here, I got a cheque to-day for some work, and can easily spare it. Your cough will kill you, Stuart. Do let me ask you to take the coat; it's as comfortable as a horse rug. You're not offended, are you?"

He flushed up, as was his wont when affected. "You are very good to think of me like this, Fraser. No, I am not offended, and will take the coat if you like, as this cough cuts me like a knife. But, I say, I don't want the boots—these are not so bad. Poor old boots!"

"Well, come along first; I got a fire made to-night, and intended to ask you to sit by it. Come on."

Well, we got home, and I took the old coat from the peg on the door. It wasn't half a bad one, this old Irish frieze, and had done me yeoman service many a time when my other one was—seconded for special service. It was well worn, but still without a hole, and not at all bad to look at, and as comfortable as a foiling-glove. Stuart put it on, and it covered him as generously as a Lifeguardsman's cloak.

Then I made up my little pile and found it worked out beautifully.

"Stuart, you'll have to get the boots; there's heaps of money."

He didn't seem to hear, and I looked round at him as he sat dreamy and unconscious, gazing into the fire, the slightest flush on the cheeks, which were unkindly hollowing, and the circles of his eyes deep and tell-tale.

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"Stuart, listen! You must get the boots. But come, let us go and get some supper at a quiet place I know."

I had to enforce the invitation, which, though it was strange enough to the poor boy, he wanted to decline. But in the end he consented, putting on the coat with a shy laugh, and we went out together.

At supper he chatted as gaily as a schoolboy on his holiday, and, sanguine as his seventeen years, discussed the golden future and all the happy things to come. How he must—oh, yes!—get on and make a name, and with it money. How he would travel and see everything, and every place, and everybody. How I, too, was to make my name and life would be like summer roses for us two together. And so on in a host of foolish, happy dreams, and then he grew thoughtful and silent, and his eyes large and bright, the lips parted, and a bright, hectic flush coloured round the cheek-bones and made him look like something spiritual. Hectic! And the horrid word would cross and cross my mind again; for I had come to love this lonely waif boy as a father loves his child.

* * * * *

The next day was a "city day" for me—days on which I submitted copy to my editorial patrons. I was detained in town till late in the night, but got an unexpected cheque for work, and vowed that Stuart should stay with me and we would face the wolf together.

On the next evening I went out.

It was snowing, and the dull, muffled sound of the Old Church bells tolled out nine strokes as I passed under the quaint, squat tower.

Smoking and philosophising in my own untutored way, I passed along the Pensioners' Hospital, up to Victoria Bridge, down by the Foot Guards', and back again. But young Stuart hadn't come, and I turned towards his house. As I got to Cheyne Walk I saw a slight figure in the frieze coat come slowly along. But it wasn't he, and I was surprised to find I could have made the mistake.

At his house the light was burning brightly in the little window, and I thought better of disturbing him.

On the the morrow-noon I called again. The landlady opened the door, and I could see through the narrow hall into her kitchen. A golden-haired tot with curls about her face was sitting on the floor tying a bunch of violets with thread, her pretty little head bent low upon her work.

"Is Mr. Charles Stuart at home?" I inquired of the unhappy-faced old creature. She looked at me stupidly, and was silent; but, recollecting herself, turned in a manner half-dazed to the side-room and showed me in.

There was a long plain deal box resting on two kitchen chairs with a stool between. In it lay Stuart, marble-cold, with a stony smile upon the lips and his eyes closed upon the world.

Then the little golden-haired maid came in and placed the bunch of violets in his folded hands, and kneeling by the coffin-side, sobbed a childish prayer in sharp anguish.

By the head chair was a pair of boots, new, coarse, cheap, and hard; the old ones, patched and broken, were lying underneath the bed, and the old frieze coat was hanging by the door.

I groped my way out, frozen to the heart, and spent my last few shillings on a wreath, and, together with the child with golden hair, laid it on his pauper grave at Brompton.

James Grant.

On TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd,

AND EVERY TUESDAY AFTERWARDS,

So Long as the Public Wants it and I have Time, I am Going to Let Them Have

DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL.

I do not want to say too much about the merits of my paper here for the simple reason that I do not believe in giving my good things away for nothing.

The choicest products of my brain will be found in "Dan Leno's Comic Journal," every Tuesday, and can be procured by everybody for

A HALFPENNY.

Besides, I have not time this week to write a long notice—it has taken me all my time to get accustomed to being an editor and engaging my staff.

The principal member, by the way, will be Daniel, Junior. He will be my right-hand man, unless he comes to an untimely end.

I left that boy for a few minutes the other day to see the printers, and say a few words to them—nice, quiet, picturesque words about mistakes they had made, and when I got back I found him all mixed up in the new spring poet trap.

He nearly ruined that trap, and I have been put to great expense over it. I do not want to absolutely kill a boy—at least, not one of my own boys—but—well—that boy, Daniel, Junior, is a caution.

What do you think he did the same day? He got two paper bags and tied them over the heads of the family cat and dog. Did you ever see a cat or a dog try to get out of a paper bag tied over its head? It does it backwards.

Now just picture that in your mind's eye. Just think that you had four feet and no hands and a paper bag tied over your head.

You would try to step out of it—backwards. That is what my cat and my dog were doing. And, not having eyes in their tails, they were upsetting everything in the room in their great grief.

I did not know anything about it until the cat walked up the rungs of the chair and then up my back and over my head, backwards all the time, mind you, and then—well, that boy went home to his mother and said his father had been ill-treating him.

It upset me dreadfully for a time because I was just going to press with the first number of the paper. If any errors have crept in or it is not as bright as it might be it must be laid down to this.

No 2 will be perfect, as Daniel, Junior, is at home for a few days, not being able to sit down on the office stool with any degree of comfort.

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All on a Winter's Night.

I met Dick Wilton in the City the other day, and having what is euphemistically termed a social evening on hand to be arranged for, I thought to capture him then and there. To my intense surprise—for he is a genial sort of chap, and being a bit of a musician and jolly company and in constant request for these functions, which he greatly enjoyed—Dick refused point blank.

"Off colour?" I queried. "You used to be rather great at this sort of thing."

"No; the fact of the matter is, old man, I don't care about any more adventures just now," he replied. "I have just got over the effects of one social evening and I'd like the recollection of that to become a bit blurred before I take on another. If you were in the old 'digs' I wouldn't mind; but you are out in the wilderness, so to speak, and I ain't partial to wildernesses — not suburban wildernesses just now."

My interest and curiosity were aroused, and by a little adroit manœuvring I contrived to get Wilton round to the Club, and over a bit of lunch extracted the following story from him.

* * * * *

WILTON'S STORY.

The week before last old Fripps came round to my place—you know old Fripps?—used to be in Martingale and Cooper's with me? Yes! Well, he had got some friends coming in and he wanted me to run down and help entertain them. He lives out your way —a beast of a place, with six houses set in five-and-twenty square miles of wilderness, dotted with unfinished samples of the jerry-builder's art, and a station. To be brief, I misunderstood him and went a week before the time; and when I got out at Barnhurst Lane somewhere between seven and eight in the evening there was nobody at the station to meet me, and I hadn't the ghost of an idea where Fripps's place was. He had told me that as a matter of fact there wasn't any address beyond the name of the house, which I promptly forgot, but that anyone could direct me. To add to the fun of the thing, it was damp and misty, and with a raw cold air that pierced through your coat as if it were gossamer. However, I had got a thick plaid shawl with me, and I rolled that round my mouth, being a bit weak on the chest, and set out, bag in hand and music case tucked under my arm.

As I got away from the station on to lower ground the mist became denser and denser—a thick white blanket of cold clammy fog that you could have cut up in chunks and heaved at anyone like snowballs. The farther I walked the further I seemed to be getting from civilisation. Not a solitary house could I discern, and when I stepped into a marshy pond with about eighteen inches of water in it, I began to think that I must have gone astray.

I retraced my steps, or I thought I was doing so, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing lights ahead of me. They proceeded, I discovered on drawing nearer, from an open back door of one of those genteel villa residences, and in the garden, in a dressing gown and smoking cap, was old Fripps himself, busily engaged in taking in the family washing. He seemed astonished and embarrassed as I went towards him, and made a bolt for the open doorway. I dodged across to intercept him, and then began a most undignified and disgraceful chase round the back premises of the Fripps's family mansion. The muffler round my head prevented my singing out, and, hampered by my luggage, I couldn't make very good time.

Fripps himself was heavily handicapped by the double armful of clothes that he stoutly clung to; but he knew the lay of the chicken house and the rabbit hutch and dog-kennel, and while I tumbled over these things he was able to dodge round them and thus secure an advantage of me. I anathematised him in my mind for an old fool, and was beginning to think of turning up the hunt when his wife appeared in the doorway.

"Bolt the door, it's the lunatic!" screamed Fripps frantically, and then as I halted in consternation the door was slammed and bolted, and Fripps, clothes and all, made a dive for the side gate and scampered down the road for all he was worth. I scuttled after him; but the few seconds that I had lost in sheer bewilderment at this new and curious idea of a social evening to which I had been invited were fatal, for when I got fairly into the road Fripps was swallowed up in the fog. I had observed the direction he took, and I saw nothing for it but to take my chance and run him down.

"Hang the fat-head!" I reflected savagely. "It is bad enough to bring me down here to roam about for hours in a perishing mist with wet feet and no guidance; but to be called a lunatic and abandoned in this way is too much. The next time that Fripps catches me down at any of his beastly parties he'll have singularly good cause to congratulate himself."

Then I wondered whether I had made a mistake—whether it was Fripps that I was chasing. It looked like him, and the voice belonged to Fripps; but what was he doing with the washing? Fripps was not the sort of man one would ordinarily expect to find engaged in laundry work, least of all on a party night. The whole thing was a mystery, and after a while I began to wonder whether I had gone to Fripps's at all or whether I wasn't at home in bed and dreaming it all. I tumbled in a ditch just then, and concluded that the affair was real enough, and that I was sufficiently awake to know that I was uncomfortable, and sufficiently uncomfortable to know that I was awake.

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All this time I was sprinting across the country, occasionally giving a loud hullo on the off-chance of Fripps hearing me and putting an end to the silly game he was playing. In my haste and anger I quite forgot the muffler round my mouth, which was calculated (and indeed did) to so change my voice that Fripps entirely failed to recognise it. The bag I was carrying, though it contained merely a change of clothes, began to weigh as though it were packed with pig lead (which I believe is weightier than the ordinary lead which isn't pig), and my arm was aching and my brain was awhirl with vexation and fog.

At last "Oh, hang it," thought I, "I'll go back to the house. If Fripps fancies paper chases at this time of night he can have 'em to himself—I'm not on." So, back I went, and back, had I only known it, came Fripps, washing and all, stalking me Indian fashion, an action that under the circumstances was positively heroic, and would have been admirable if it hadn't been so muddle-headed.

It took me a considerable time to find the house, and I sampled three more ditches (or else it was the same ditch on three separate and distinct occasions) before I finally came within sight and sound of civilisation in the shape of a goat-shed, that I remembered passing just before I struck Fripps's house on the last occassion. There was a light burning in the hall, and I went and hung on the door-bell, and made the welkin ring; but not a response could I elicit. I roamed round the house, alternately knocking, kicking, and yelling at the back door, and ringing at the front. Once or twice I thought I heard a terrified squeak, immediately suppressed, from one of the upper rooms; but I couldn't be sure, and at last, downright angry, I determined to place my bag in the tool-shed under cover, and go out and find Fripps and tell him exactly what I thought of him, and then go straight back to London.

There wasn't a train until eleven, or I would have gone back then and there. As it was, I thought I might as well do something useful with the time I had on hand, and I resolved to utilise it in giving Fripps an idea for another kind of social evening, as original as his own, and more satisfactory to myself.

Fripps's tool-shed was a mucky sort of place, and smelt stably, I discovered when I got inside, and I gripped my bag between my knees, and fumbled in my pockets for a match with a view of taking stock before depositing my goods in temporary security while I attended to the work I had in hand. As I fumbled, the door suddenly banged to, a bolt was shot home, and Fripps voice exclaimed: "Got him!"

Before I could do or say anything, I heard his feet scrunching on the gravel as he retreated to the back door.

"I've got him, Milly," he yelled excitedly. "Caged him up in the tool-shed beautifully. Come and open the door—MILLY, MIL—LEY! Come and open this door! It's all right; I've got him!"

After a few minutes I could hear the door being hesitatingly unfastened, and then it banged to, and I was left in a dirty tool-shed, along with an old wheelbarrow, a broken rake, a spade, about fifty pots of geraniums put there to winter, and the mist.

I kicked a way through the flower-pots, taking a malicious pleasure in smash ng as many as I could put my toe into *en route*, and, upturning the barrow, seated myself on it and produced a pipe with a view to giving the situation thorough and critical consideration. It wanted it! One thing was absolutely certain, and that was that Fripps had gone clean stark staring mad. And his wife was aiding and abetting him. Perhaps, all things considered, I ought to feel thankful that he hadn't fallen on me unexpectedly, and done me serious injury instead of locking me up in a dirty shed. But I was chilled through, and my feet were soaked, and just then I couldn't feel thankful for anything short of getting out and into the train, on my way back to town.

Then an uneasy thought struck me. Supposing Fripps were contemplating something ghastly! Supposing he had only captured me and locked me up until he could devise some especially atrocious action against me! Madmen, I had always been given to understand, are so beastly ingenious in these matters, and what could I do in defence? Nothing, absolutely nothing, if he operated from the outside, say, with a few kettles of boiling water trickled through the roof or a pan of sulphur shoved under the door. Then I began to drivel. I wondered whether I could sit down on the sulphur and suppress it, and if suppressing sulphur by this means were painful. I speculated on constructing a cave of refuge from the wheelbarrow, into which I might retire should boiling water be hit upon as a nice and likely means of doing me to death.

Or supposing Fripps came back with the wood-axe—he might be even at that moment out in the scullery sharpening it up with a file, and grinding his teeth, and frothing at the mouth in hideous enjoyment over the treat he had got in store.

I remembered as in a dream how, when I was a youngster stopping at Uncle Thomas' farm, we used to gather round the condemned cell of some unfortunate pig or rooster and watch with intense glee the preparation being made for the execution. Supposing those fowls and pigs knew what was in store for them—ugh! I shuddered and almost resolved if I ever got away with my life to consider about turning vegetarian.

Then my pipe went out, and striking a match to relight it with, my eyes fell on the spade. Happy thought! I could defend myself against a personal attack. It would be better than tamely sitting down in a wheelbarrow to be butchered, any way. I went across and balanced the implement in my hand. It was very heavy, half of it making the handle, and half the business end, and extemporising a barricade out of the wheelbarrow, would serve me capitally, and it was odd if I couldn't defeat Fripps even with the strength and cunning his madness gave him in a fair fight. A heavy jump and a few hearty thumps, and I pretty soon had my cudgel ready, a bit jagged and awkward to grip, perhaps; but serviceable.

Barely had I got the wheelbarrow in place and arranged such other defences as I could with the materials at hand, when I heard subdued voices coming down the path, and by and bye two men came to a halt outside my prison and held a consultation. One of them was Fripps—I knew that positively by the voice, and I was rather puzzled. Could it be that he had deceived his neighbours? Or was the whole village in league with him? Or perhaps they were all mad together.

What they were saying I couldn't make out, for I had got to my own side of my barrier by then, and was holding myself in readiness for whatever might transpire. Suddenly the bolt was drawn, the gleam of a lantern shone in the doorway which framed the picture of a hasty struggle between two men. Then a heavy body shot forward and tumbled over my barricade and commenced to yell for mercy, while the door was again slammed

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to and bolted, and a peculiar grim chuckle of glee came from the other side of it.

I was more mystified than ever; and when by my ear alone—for it was pitch dark—I detected that the grovelling object on the floor who was yelling and supplicating for mercy by turns was Fripps, I frankly had to acknowledge that the situation was beyond me. However, the immediate safety of number one was my present concern, and in as stern a voice as I could muster I commanded the deplorably cowardly specimen of criminal lunatic before me to keep on the ground, and not to move an inch on pain of being instantly brained.

Fripps moaned. "Oh the cowardly brute, to shove me in here with a dangerous lunatic!" he stammered incoherently with chattering teeth.

"Eh?" said I, pricking up my ears. "Look, here, Fripps, if you are Fripps—are you mad, or is this some new-fashioned, distant suburban idea of a social evening? You know me—I'm Wilton—or I was when I started out to visit your jovial premises. Just at present I am not a lunatic, though I am decidedly dangerous; and mad or sane, I've a mind to knock your stupid wits out of your head with the remains of your own spade."

"Wilton—what, Dickie Wilton?" queried Fripps in petrified astonishment.

"Yes, Dickie Wilton," I mocked.

"Good heavens," he stammered. "What ever are you doing here?"

"Doing—here!" I ejaculated. "Doing here! What do you mean? I came down to Barnhurst Lane on your invitation to what you humourously termed 'a social evening.' I'm in this filthy shed in company with a lunatic or a fool—I am not quite sure which—well, for reasons that are best known to you, or should be. It isn't for my own personal pleasure or advantage, I can assure you."

"But I asked for you next Thursday," protested Fripps. "If you are really Wilton. Strike a match and let me see you."

"Not much," said I. "If you are really Fripps and are not luny, strike one yourself. I've got a bit of wood here that I've a peculiar fancy for retaining just now."

After some fumbling Fripps produced a match and struck it, and the illumination satisfied him of my identity, and myself of his sanity, though I was even more puzzled than before. White and shaken Fripps was; but he certainly had all his wits about him—what there ever were of them.

"But I don't understand," he protested, breaking down altogether and very near crying outright. "I was gathering clothes when the lunatic came, and he ran me for miles; and then I dodged him and came back and caught him in the tool-shed and locked him in there, and now it's you. And who's the other man?" he concluded suspiciously,

"Which one?" I asked.

"The one outside—the man I found in the garden and asked to come and help me secure the lunatic?"

"I know not," I answered. "All this talk of lunatics and playing at lunatics is getting on my understanding and paralysing it—even as my understandings are paralysed by sampling your rural hospitality, which seems to run in the direction of fog, and ditches, and toolsheds."

We were locked in that toolshed until the thin, grey dawn of morning shone through the chinks and crevices and revealed to us the joyful fact that a little judicious picking with a penknife would have shot that bolt and restored us to liberty whenever we fancied it.

Fripps simply drivelled all the night through, and nothing connected or satisfying could I piece together from his whimperings of lunatics and sudden murder.

As soon as I detected the state of the fastenings of our prison, I picked the bolt and ran my host up to his own back door half dazed with excitement, terror and cold. A white-faced maiden, flanked by an equally white and nervous mistress, came and peeped through the glass at us when I knocked. The latter recognising her husband—I should have been ashamed to own him if I had been her—pushed the scared Abigail aside, and frantically tearing open the door, flung herself into the arms of her silly hero.

Mrs. Fripps was personally unknown to me, so I had to introduce myself.

"I am Mr. Wilton, Mrs. Fripps," I observed, somewhat ungenially, I am afraid. "I've been down for a social evening with Fripps, and I've had it. I find these sort of things rather trying, though, and if you would not mind my joining Fripps in some breakfast and a warm-up, I shall feel ever so much obliged. I am afraid there is not a train I can catch until eight, and your charming little village doesn't seem to boast of much in the way of hotel accommodation."

To do the Frippses justice, they played up boldly now that terror with the night had flown. Fripps pulled himself together and made what amends he could with a hot bath, the loan of some foot-wear, while my own was being dried and cleaned, and a snug breakfast.

During the meal I learnt some details of the affair which considerably enlightened me, and really, I could not altogether blame Fripps for what had transpired. In the first place, I was a week ahead of my engagement, and therefore entirely unexpected.

For the rest, it seems that just about dusk the previous evening, a couple of attendants had arrived on the scene to warn Fripps, along with other of the villagers, that a dangerous lunatic had contrived to effect his escape from the county asylum, which stood about a mile and a half off across the fields.

Naturally enough, the family and domestic were full of the affair, and had got lunatic writ large upon their brains by the time I arrived on the scene. Being washing day, the backyard was full of fluttering garments, which had been neglected in the excitement of the announcement. When they were thought of the girl frankly refused to risk her valuable life by going one step outside the door that night, and Fripps volunteered to do the job for her.

He went—I came—he saw, and the rest of the silly muddle is known to you.

* * * * *

"Thanks, old man, but I'd rather not come. I've had one social evening in the country and I'm going to let that last the season."

"All right," said I. "I'll let you off if you feel that way about it. But who was the other chap—the man who shoved Fripps in the shed?"

"The lunatic—the actual, genuine *bonâ fide* lunatic," said Wilton with a grin. "Old Fripps picked him up by the gate and pressed him into the service to come and help him secure the lunatic in the shed. They found him next day asleep in the organ loft of the village church, and hauled him back to his mansion. Pretty sharp of him, wasn't it?"

"Lovely," said I. "As good as a play."

"Perhaps," said Wilton dubiously, "if I hadn't been in the cast."

R. Andom.

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By
GEORGE
GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Gold-Ship "Portland."

On the 6th of April, soon after daylight, the *Circe* was lying under the low and still ice-fringed shore of Uniack Island with a full head of steam on, but only moving slowly to and fro with enough way on her to keep her clear of the shore. Every now and then she ran out a mile or so into the narrow channel which separates the island from the end of the Alaskan peninsula, and when she did this all eyes on deck were turned anxiously northward, looking out over the grey, misty sea.

She had been two days doing this, and as each day had passed expectation had risen higher and impatience grown keener, for this little channel running between the two desolate shores was the water-way to and from the mouth of the Yukon river, the outlet of El Dorado in the North, and the *Circe* was lying in wait for the *Portland*, the first steamer of the American Transportation Company's fleet to leave St. Michael with the first consignment of gold from the Klondyke fields—that is to say, the gold which had arrived too late for shipping in the previous autumn. According to the information that had been picked up at Seattle, she was expected to bring about half a million sterling worth of dust and nuggets, and this Lorrain had determined should, if everything went well, be the reward of his first essay in the new piracy.

As for the *Portland*, she was just then steaming quietly southward some ten miles away, and her captain and crew were thinking of anything rather than the possibility of a nineteenth century pirate lying within a few miles of them, and prepared to go to any length of inhumanity that his predecessors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would have gone to get posession of her golden freight, and what was in its way almost as valuable, her coal.

The *Circe* had thrown off all disguise now, for she had bidden farewell to civilisation until the time came when her raid on the goldships became impossible, and she would vanish to some remote part of the world with her golden cargo and then turn up again in an entirely new character. Her guns were all in position and ready for use at a moment's notice, and her crew, armed to the teeth, were lounging about the decks looking out over the sea, and anxiously waiting the signal to go to quarters.

At length, as she rounded the south-eastern point of the island for the fourth time, there came from the man at the fore cross-trees the welcome, long awaited hail:

"Steamer in sight, sir, to the nor'ard, about six miles away on the——"

"All right. I see her!" said Captain Peters from the bridge. "You can come down. 'Tain't likely to be any other than the one we want."

He turned his glasses on to the cloud of smoke that was mixing with the mist which hung about fifty feet from the sea and saw a small two-masted steamer running leisurely along towards the channel.

"That's her, Seenyor," he said to Lorrain, who had just come up on to the bridge. "That's the argosy of our hopes, as I have heard that a poet says somewhere. There comes two million dollars gold, or thereabouts, and inside an hour or two we'll have it safe under hatches if we get any luck at all."

"Luck!" said Lorrain. "There mustn't be any luck about this sort of thing, my dear skipper. We mustn't leave anything to the Fates. They have a nasty habit of taking you very pleasantly and easily into an ugly place and then turning round and leaving it to you whether you get out or stop there. No, this is going to be good management. We must remember that this yacht is absolutely all we have to depend upon except our guns and our own wits, so we must leave nothing to chance, either for or against us."

"From which I take it, Seenyor," said the skipper looking up quickly at him, "that the merciful persuasion of her ladyship and Mrs. Peters have not altered your mind about what's to happen to the people that we do business with."

"No," said Lorrain. "I'm afraid I can't do it. I don't like to refuse them, but business is business, and the secret of success in this business is mostly wrapped up in that very wise saying of our predecessors in the professions 'Dead men tell no tales.' What we've got to do is to clear out ship after ship as fast as possible until the place gets too hot for us, and then clear out ourselves. If we let one steamer, or even one man, get away after we've shown ourselves as what we are, it simply means that we shall have a squadron up here from San Francisco and Nanaimo, just as fast as the ships can steam, and I don't want that little experience off Samana repeated. We had miraculous luck then, but next time Dame Fortune might be looking the other way. Then we should get a six-inch shell through our boilers. No, I really am afraid that we can't afford to show any mercy. I'm not naturally a cruel man, as you know, but business is business."

"Right, Seenyor!" replied the skipper, with an evil twinkle in his little blue eyes. "That's the sort of talk I

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like. Makes me real good to hear it. Business first, and all the rest after it—and a darned long way after it, too. That's my motto. Now I guess we'd best get to quarters. You've given your orders, and you can just stand around and watch them executed till you feel like giving some more."

Captain Peters put his whistle to his lips and blew a short, sharp call. The men instantly jumped to their places with a smartness which conclusively proved that, if their commander had somewhat original ideas on the subject of drill, he knew all that was worth learning about discipline. As a matter of fact, during the voyage from Seattle, he had pounded two of the biggest men on board into speechless helplessness with his own hands and fatally shot a third over quite minor points of order.

He was a man who never did anything by halves. If he took up a project he threw himself soul and body into it. He would have fought just as desperately for the Cubans under his late owner as he would have done against them if he had been in the employ of Spain, and now that he was the commander of a piratical craft he had fully made up his mind to be a pirate and do everything on the old pirate lines.

He entirely endorsed his employer's pitiless purpose to leave no one to tell tales, and he did this the more readily for the reason that the agreement between Lorrain and himself had been considerably modified after the change of plans. Instead of serving three years before coming into possession of the ship and his three hundred thousand dollars, he was now to have her with his share of the plunder and the Trinidad treasure as soon as Lorrain's share amounted to a million sterling and her ladyship's to half a million, and the sooner this came about the sooner he would be his own master—after which he proposed, to use his own words, "to raise general almighty Cain and make things hum around promiscuous like."

He had in fact, little as it might be expected, a curious crooked vein of romance running through the flinty strata of his nature, and he found not a little pride and glory in his conception of himself as a regular up-to-date nineteenth century pirate, cruising the seas in a vessel of matchless speed, with the beautiful Madame Sybil as his bride and a good assortment of selected desperadoes at his beck and call, and as he gave his first order on that memorable morning he felt that he stood at the beginning of a career which, if he had anything like good fortune, should completely eclipse that of the best—or the worse—of the old buccaneers. He would also have given a very good round sum down for the addition of a couple of inches or so to his stature. But that was a detail.

The captain of the *Portland* was on the bridge preparing to take his vessel through the channel, and some two or three hundred miners who had braved the terrors of the Klondyke winter and won fortunes from the frozen earth were crowding the fore part of the deck looking at the tongue of land which was the half-way house on their journey back to the civilisation that was waiting to welcome them and their gold with open arms.

In a few days more, they thought, they would be at Seattle, and then San Francisco or New York or London, and those who had spent so many weary days harnessed to sledges like beasts of draught, or staggering under packs through the endless snows, would be lolling in drawing-room cars or feasting in great hotels, the wonder and envy of thousands. The toil was over and the reward was to come, so they dreamt, and it would have come but for that little black shape which came flying round the island and up through the channel towards them at a speed that seemed to them incredible.

Instinctively a vague fear seemed to take possession of some of them, and they began to say among themselves:

"Wonder what that chap's doing here."

"Guess he don't look as if he was up to much good."

"Gosh, how he *do* steam!"

"He's no regular cruiser."

"By the Lord he's got guns aboard!"

Then suddenly someone spoke the dreaded word "pirate." It flew from mouth to mouth like wildfire. Then there was a stampede along the deck, and men ran to their cabins and berths to get out rifles and revolvers, for they had no notion of giving up the wealth that had cost them so much toil and privation without a fight. There were about a dozen women on board, too, wives of men who had been poor and were now rich. Some of them were rich themselves by their own labour, and they were just so many more reasons for making a fight for it.

But the captain of the *Portland* saw at a glance that, if the strange craft should turn out to be what wild rumours written up with lurid details in the American press had prophesied might be found this spring in the track of the gold-ships, resistance was entirely out of the question. So, after a brief consultation with his chief officer, he sent down orders that no one was to appear armed on the deck—orders which were, of course, laughed at and disregarded—and the miners soon began to swarm up again, loading their repeating rifles and revolvers as they came.

The *Circe*, showing no colours, came flying up over the smooth grey water past the *Portland* at a distance of about a mile, swung round astern of her in a swift, beautiful sweep, and then ran up alongside, slowing down as she came, until she was running abreast of her at exactly the same speed about fifty yards away. There was a little man in a gold-laced peaked cap and a long naval overcoat on the bridge, and beside him was a taller man in a fur cap, fur-lined coat, and long boots.

"Is that the *Portland?*" came a hail from the little man.

"Yes. Who are you? Why don't you show your colours?"

"Keep your hair on, Captain, and mind your own business," was the reply. "You wouldn't like 'em if you saw 'em. Look here, tell those passengers of yours not to play about with those shooting irons. They might hurt someone. Hurry up now, or someone *will* get hurt. Ready with those Maxims there forward! Now then, my friend, you have three minutes to get those weapons collected before these pepper boxes get to business. Stand by to fire on the word, boys, and let go if a single gun goes off on board that hooker."

The Captain of the *Portland* saw at a glance that the little man on the bridge was quite in earnest and that his own ship and passengers were absolutely at his mercy. The taller man was just leaning on the bridge-rail and looking on in the attitude of an amused and interested spectator. A volley from the miners might kill them both and possibly one or two of the crew, but the next instant the four machine guns would be pouring their torrents of bullets across his decks, then the cannon would open fire and a few minutes later the *Portland* would go to the bottom. The miners themselves saw something of the same sort. They huddled together in groups, discussing the matter with desperate earnestness and considerable luxuriance of language. Then Captain Peter's harsh, high-pitched voice rang across the water saying:

"Now then, Captain, time's up. Are those guns down?"

The captain of the *Portland* threw up his hands and shouted:

"All right, no one shall shoot. Put those guns down, boys. It's no use, we can't fight."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when one of the miners who had been standing aft by himself fidgeting with a Winchester rifle suddenly brought it up to his shoulder and took point-blank aim at Captain Peters. With a movement so quick that Lorrain's eye could hardly follow it the little man whipped a long-barrelled revolver out of the pocket of his great coat and without apparently troubling to take aim fired and dropped the man just as he was pulling the trigger. The rifle went off and the bullet sang past Lorrain's ear.

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"Good shot, captain," he said with a nod. "If that's your usual style I shouldn't care for you to shoot at me."

"Waal I don't think you'd find it healthy, Seenyor," he replied, and then, almost in the same breath, he shouted out: "Hold those Maxims a minute. We'll give them another chance. Now you sir, I hope you see we're in earnest, and by the great snake if there's any more fooling I'll clear the decks. You've got a ton or so of gold aboard, and that's what we've come for, so the quicker and the more peaceably you hand it out the quicker and safer you'll get to Seattle. Now what do you say about it?"

"That you're a —— pirate!" shouted the Captain of the *Portland* in a sudden frenzy of rage and despair. "But you've got the drop on us and I suppose we can't help ourselves."

"Yes, that's about the size of it," said Captain Peters, "only as we have ladies on board this craft perhaps you might say it a bit politer next time. Now what you've got to do's this. Run in under the lee of the land there and drop anchor. While you're doing that collect those arms and drop them overboard so that nobody else can get hurt. You can start that right away. Then you can break out the gold and send it aboard here. I can't spare any of my boats, so you must use your own. Sorry to give you so much trouble, but you can't expect sensible people to go sweating and freezing up to Klondyke when they can have the gold like this for asking. As a sensible man yourself you'll see that."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Piracy up-to-date.

The *Circe* had been gradually drawing nearer to the *Portland* while this rather one-sided conversation was going on until only about ten yards separated them, and Captain Peters was able to make himself distinctly heard without the trouble of shouting. Meanwhile, too, her ladyship and Mrs Peters had come up on deck, both looking very charming in their splendid furs, and were watching the strange scene on board the American steamer with a keen interest, that was not without apprehension when they saw the crowd of fierce, sullen faces that were turned, angry-eyed, on the *Circe*.

"Poor fellows, they must feel very savage at having to give up their gold after they've gone through so much to get it!" said her ladyship, with a touch of sympathy in her tone.

"Yes, I'm afraid that's only natural," replied Madame Sybil. "We should feel rather angry ourselves in their place, but as that interesting little husband of mine would say, 'it's business.' Still I do think it's rather too bad not to let them go, after we've taken all they have."

"But that too is business, I'm afraid," said Lorrain who had just come down from the bridge and joined them, "and, you know, consideration for your fellow-creatures is just as dangerous in piracy as it is in any other business; but you will have plenty of time for a constitutional before the unpleasant part of the work begins."

"Then you think we shall be quite safe here on deck?" asked her ladyship.

"Oh yes, there won't be any shooting—at least, not yet, You see they're collecting the arms, and there goes a batch of them overboard. It must be very aggravating to those poor chaps to have to stand being treated like a lot of children, but I expect the real reason for their good behaviour is that they've most of them got rich claims up the Klondyke and think it preferable to lose what they got on board to being obliged to leave their claim-interest to their heir-at-law. I'm really quite sorry to have to disappoint them after all."

"Yes, I'm sure you must be," said Madame Sybil with a touch of undisguised sarcasm. "I'm afraid, Señor Lorrain, that you are much too kind-hearted a man to make a good pirate."

"Possibly," he said with a little bow, "but then you see I am fortunate in possessing an entirely pitiless executive in your excellent husband."

"Yes," said Madame Sybil, colouring slightly, "I've no doubt you'll find him a most valuable help. Good heavens, what a voice the little man has when he shouts!"

The two vessels were getting round under the lee of the peninsula, and Captain Peters was giving his orders in the tone of a man who meant to have them obeyed. The miners had given up their arms with savage reluctance, and were going below in obedience to commands from the *Circe*. Lorrain had been perfectly correct in his reasoning as to the cause of their submission. All of them were rich—several of them millionaires in dollars if not in pounds—and their claim interest and prospects of floating them on the American and English markets were infinitely more valuable than the gold they had brought away with them. There had been a fierce dispute between the richer and the poorer—the latter of course wanting to fight at all hazards, but the others, backed by the captain and officers, settled the question by taking the arms of the more truculent away by force and then compelling them to go below.

As soon as the *Portland's* anchor was down, the captain, sad and angry and sick at heart, but still believing that he was doing his duty in saving his ship and the lives of his passengers, unlocked the strong-room and set the crew to work bringing up the boxes of gold. Then two boats were lowered, and load by load nearly a hundred boxes, each containing a hundredweight of gold, were conveyed to the side of the *Circe* and hoisted on to her deck.

When this was done, Captain Peters sent his chief officer with an escort of half-a-dozen armed men to go through the *Portland's* papers and make certain that none of the gold consignment had been kept back. When they had satisfied themselves on this point and that there was nothing more in the ship worth taking out except her coal and a quantity of petroleum, the chief officer ordered the captain to open his coal bunkers, as the *Circe* wanted to borrow some.

"But you're not going to leave us without coal to get home with?" said the captain in new alarm. "It's a bad coast, you know, for fogs and currents, and it would be as much murder as sinking us to send us adrift without coal."

"You needn't trouble about that, Captain," said the chief officer very politely. "Our own bunkers are nearly full, but you'll understand that we want to keep them quite full, and we'll leave you plenty of coal to do all the steaming you'll want to do. We shall have to ask you to keep your passengers below while the coaling's going on, because we'll have to range up alongside, and we don't want anything like a rush, you see, as that would only bring about needless bloodshed. Those Maxim guns are ugly things at close quarters."

"There is no need for you to do any bullying, sir," said the captain angrily. "I know my duty to my owners and passengers, and that duty is to save the ship and take her home. After that the American government can take the thing in hand."

"We shall be most happy to see the American government any time it likes to pay us a visit either in person or by proxy. Those guns of ours don't look very big, but they can hit mighty hard, and its twelve pounds of dynamite every time they do hit. We made a pretty mess of one of Uncle Sam's cruisers off Samana a few weeks ago."

"The —— you did!" cried the captain, stepping back a pace from him. "Then this is that infernal *Minnehaha* that they're talking about all over States. Darned if I didn't think so when I saw the way you could steam. Well, she's a pretty good craft for the game you've taken up, but it may interest you to know that although you knocked those three ships about pretty well they all got safe to port and started re-fitting, and it strikes me it won't be long after we get back to Seattle that the *Pocahontas* will be round here looking for you."

"We shall be glad to see her too," said the chief officer

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imperturbably. "Our boss has got a bit of an account to settle with her. But, talking about her, can you tell me whether anyone on board her got hurt—Mr. Tristam or his wife or any of them?"

"No, sir," said the captain, "you and your boss will be glad to hear that they didn't. I did read that Mr. Tristam got badly wounded with a splinter, but then you know what liars our papers are. The other news I got was official from an officer on the guard-ship at Portland."

"Well, wherever you got it I'm obliged to you for it and I daresay the boss and the skipper will be too. Now I think we'd better see about getting that coal out. We want to be at Juneau in a day or two. We've heard that the *Oregon* is going to take some of the stuff from there, and we don't want to delay you and your passengers any longer than we can help."

"You're mighty polite, I must say, for a lot of dod-gasted pirates and sea-robbers," growled the captain, "and if I live to see you hanged down Portland way I'll remember it when you're swinging."

"Thanks," said the chief officer. "Hope you'll live till you see it, still there's nothing like being friends over these little matters, is there? You can't think how pleased I am that everything's passed off so pleasantly."

The two ships had been brought together by this time and the coaling started. As it was not very pleasant to be on deck, Lorrain took it into his head to invite the captain of the *Portland* and those of his millionaire passengers who were married to come on board the yacht with their wives for lunch, and they, being rather taken with the idea, accepted. It was certainly the most expensive lunch that they had ever eaten, and Lorrain and her ladyship as well as Captain Peters and his wife exerted themselves so much to soothe the ruffled feelings of their guests, and altogether made themselves so very charming that, by the time a dozen of excellent champagne had been disposed of, their guests found themselves beginning to wonder whether after all these really were pirates, or whether the whole thing wasn't some huge practical joke which somehow or other would turn out all right in the end.

To a disinterested observer understanding all the circumstances the scene in the cabin of the yacht would have been a very curious one. The annals of the old piracy contain plenty of instances of polite sea-rovers asking their victims to dinner and lavishing every form of hospitality upon them, just as the history of highway robbery relates many shining examples of the courtesy on the part of the knights of the road, but for my own part I have never met with any specimen of crime exhibiting the cold-blooded refinement which Lorrain indulged in on this particular occasion. It was, if anything, rather worse than those old stories of the Borghias pledging their guests, well knowing that the wine they drank was poisoned.

But the illusion was very soon to vanish. When lunch was over Lorrain invited the men into the smoking-room forward for a smoke and a final drink before the two ships parted. They, like men accustomed to gamble with Destiny, entered into the spirit of the thing and went while her ladyship and Madame Sybil entertained the ladies in the cabin. The liquor flowed freely and the guests, with the exception of the captain of the *Portland*, were fast forgetting their losses under its influence, when the first officer reported to Captain Peters that the coaling was finished and the bunkers as full as they could hold.

The skipper and Lorrain asked their guests to excuse them for a few moments, and left the smoking-room. The next moment the doors were locked, and an armed sentry posted outside each of them. Half an hour later one of the doors was opened, and the captain was asked to come out. He went, wondering what was the matter now. The others were raging and storming in a half drunken fashion at being locked in, but the moment the captain was out on deck the door was forced to again and locked. Then Lorrain said:

"Now Captain, there is your ship. Don't ask any questions, but go on board, get your anchor up and go. These ladies and gentlemen will be our visitors for a little time."

"But, sir, whoever you are, this is something even worse than piracy——"

"My dear Captain, it doesn't much matter what it is. The point is, do you want your ship to sail with or without you? Of course, if you'd rather stop here——"

"Thanks, I think I had better get. It's your turn to-day, but——"

"But it may be yours some other day!" said Lorrain with a wave of his hand towards the gangway. "Certainly, at present, however, it is to-day. Good afternoon. Be good enough to get your anchor up, and be off at once."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and so the captain of the *Portland* went, the lashings holding the two vessels together were cut the moment he got on board, and the *Minnehaha* as she was henceforth to be known again sheered off and ran ahead waiting for the *Portland's* anchor to come up. While this was being done, the smoking-room doors were opened and the male guests brought out one by one and, in spite of their struggles, bound hand and foot and then tied up to the rail on the side opposite the *Portland*.

As the American steamer got under way again, her ladyship came up on to the promenade deck, flushed and laughing, and whispered something in Lorrain's ear. Presently Madame Sybil came up also and said aloud:

"They're all safe for the present, but we shall have an awful scene when we let them go."

Then what was, perhaps, the blackest tragedy in all the dark story of piracy began. The *Portland* was about a mile away when the first of the forward dynamite guns was fired. The shell struck her under the upper bridge and seemed to blow it bodily into the sea. The next hit her under the stern and burst about the water-line. She immediately began to droop sternwards, showing that a hole had been torn in her plates.

By this time her deck was swarming with a crowd of gesticulating figures. Some jumped overboard and tried to swim to the land, and then the *Minnehaha* ran up to within five hundred yards and opened fire with the two forward Maxims, while Captain Peters amused himself with a rifle picking off the swimmers in the water, remarking as he made a good shot that it was an easier death than starving ashore. Two more shells were fired broadside on at the now disabled craft. They struck her together amidships and the next moment she was enveloped in a cloud of steam from her exploding boilers.

The scene on board her was one that beggared all description, but happily for the wretches who were now at the mercy of those who knew no mercy, it did not last very long, for the *Portland* began to heel over towards the *Minnehaha*, almost like a living thing asking for a final blow to put it out of its misery. As the deck came into view two more shells were sent through it. There was a brilliant flash of light, a great black ragged hole gaped across the deck half way between the funnel and the stern, and then her bow heaved itself up out of the water, remained poised in mid-air for a few awful moments, and then with a sliding plunge the doomed craft slipped back into the depths below her and disappeared.

A few of those on board her who had escaped the shells and bullets rose to the surface again, and were seen struggling among the floating wreckage which came back with them, but they had no more chance of life than the others, for they were shot without mercy as they swam or clung to the floating timbers, and when at last the horrible work was over Captain Peters took out his revolver and said to the bound men at the rail:

"Well, gentlemen, I hope what you have seen has hurried you up with your prayers. The ladies will be our guests a little longer. Sorry we can't entertain you any more just now, so if you're ready we'll say good-bye."

(To be continued.)

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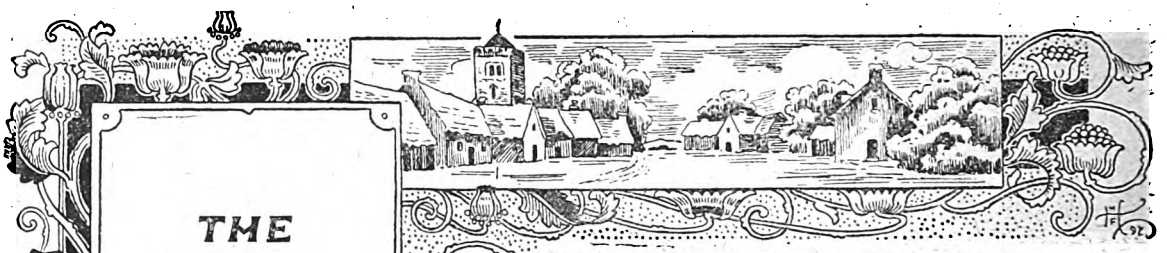

THE WATERS OF LETHE.

It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the self-esteem of a woman. If you hurt a man's pride, he will probably go off and sulk for a greater or less time; or, it may be, if the case be very bad, that he will even kill himself. But a woman will have revenge. You may think she has forgotten, you may fancy she is impotent, but there is this much of the Oriental in every woman—that she can wait.

Break her heart and she will still let it lie in the dust for you to trample upon, and she will find the pain pleasant. Yet, beware how you so much as scratch her pride; from the wound will trickle a stream of poison, that may flow slowly, but will reach you in the end.

When James Dudley was very young and just out from the military college, he was sent to a post in the West of Ireland, and there he became engaged to marry the beautiful daughter of Major Gurdon.

At the end of a year Dudley was ordered away. Absence opened his eyes to the fact that beauty alone was not enough to make him happy in his wife. And he wrote to Esther and asked her to release him, and to her parents he sent an explanation of his conduct.

The orderly put both letters into Esther's hands. She read her own first. She was sixteen years old, now, and very proud. She had also grown to care, in a vague sort of way, for the memory of the lover of her childhood. The letter was a cruel blow to her pride, and she hated the man whom she chose to think humbled her. She tore it up, as she did the one to her father, into small pieces.

There was one sentence in the former that she did not understand. The lieutenant had said: "In time you will drink of the waters of Lethe and forget me utterly as I deserve to be forgotten."

A few days later she told her father that she was not going to marry James Dudley.

"Does he know it?" asked the Major.

"Yes."

"What is your reaon?"

"Nothing in particular. I simply don't want to."

"Perhaps that won't satisfy him. However, it is just as well. I never supposed a childish affair of that sort would amount to much. You are old enough to act for yourself now."

In truth Gurdon had ambitions that soared above a mere lieutenant for his daughter. Esther should be thankful to escape so easily.

Presently she asked:

"Papa—what does it mean to drink of the water of L e-t-h-e?"

The Major explained.

"Oh," she said, "I see," and her long eyes narrowed cruelly.

Now, it might have happened in civil life that Dudley and Esther Gurdon would never meet again; but it is often different in the service.

Some years later Lieutenant Dudley walked into a London theatre one night after the curtain had gone up. The house was dark, and he kept his eyes on the stage. At the close of the act he looked about him, and the first thing he saw was a woman whose beauty startled him. And then he realised that she was the one he might have married.

She was in a box with an older woman, whom he knew.

Dudley was seized with a nervous dread of meeting those wonderful dark grey eyes. He would go at once, before he should do so. But as he rose, the older woman saw him, and smiled and beckoned to an empty chair beside her. There was nothing for it now but to go to the box.

He was cold with fear of the low-browed, black-haired, black-gowned girl with the magnificent neck and shoulders.

She smiled when they met with the regally indifferent smile that had been hers even in childhood.

"Oh, I knew Mr. Dudley years ago," she said. "I was a little girl, and was very fond of him, because he used to buy me chocolates and ribbons."

If that were her view of the past, Dudley resented it. A man does not want a beautiful girl to treat him as an old friend of infancy.

"You might suppose, Mrs. Graves," he told the other woman, "that she had been a toddling child, and I a crusty bachelor in whose pockets she felt for sweetmeats."

"I shall suppose nothing at all just at present. Sit down here and talk over those chocolate-and-ribbon days. One of my men disappointed me at the last moment. You can more than take his place, if you will consent. If I had known you were here I should have sent for you. When did you come?"

"At noon. I meant to call on you to-morrow."

Then Esther questioned him in her deep, sweet voice.

"How long shall you stop here?"

"For a fortnight, possibly."

"Where are you stationed now?" She knew well enough.

"At Dover. How does it happen that I find you here?"

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"We are stationed at Knightsbridge. You must come to see us."

"I will," he answered. He would have done anything those red lips might ask him to do. The receding tide of his love for her had swept back with a mighty force.

"How beautiful you are, Esther," he said after a moment. "But there is more than mere beauty of features now."

"Character, I suppose—which I lacked as a child. It is odd that character, even if it happened to be bad, can so improve a face."

Then she turned her head, and bestowed the light of her countenance on the civilian beside her, whose infatuation was obvious.

"Every man of her circle will hate you with a deadly hatred if Miss Gurdon happens to take a fancy to you for old times' sake," Mrs. Graves warned him.

"Even her fancy would be cheaply purchased at that cost."

"Perhaps. A woman of her beauty is not born into the world once in a cycle, certainly."

And Miss Gurdon was pleased to fancy him. She advertised the fact. She was not one to fear any means that would gain her ends. She threw away her pride, and came at his call. She forgave him the past, and met him more than half way.

But Dudley was too much in love to despise or mistrust her for this. He applied for a two months' leave, and spent every available moment of it with her. Mrs. Graves, in her quality as a school-companion of his mother's and an old friend of himself, warned him.

"Esther has done the same thing before, James. Take care. She is as beautiful as Cleopatra, and there are many who say she is as bad—at heart."

Dudley never spoke to Mrs. Graves again. His leave came to an end, and he went back to Dover. He, who had been a light mocker and a philosopher of life, saw the bottom drop out of his universe when he had to go from her. She wrote to him twice a day for a time, then once a day, then once a week and finally the orderly handed him a letter from Esther that was almost a verbatim copy of the one he had sent to her six years before, even to the closing phrase: "In time you will drink of the waters of Lethe, and will forget me as utterly as I deserve to be forgotten."

A light of memory broke, harsh and crude, through the rosy clouds that had enwrapped him. But he said to himself that justice had been meted out to him, stern and untempered. And he made no appeal.

Something more than a twelvemonth later, Esther Gurdon sat at dinner beside the man with whom she was then playing fast and loose, who would not be warned by the fate of the many others.

"You promised, you know," he said to her, "that you would answer my question to-night."

"What question?"

"Don't banter, please. I am in earnest."

"You appear to be. And everybody can see it, too. Go on and eat, and look as though you were discussing the Maxim gun or something."

"I will do whatever you choose if you will tell me if you will marry me."

"Oh! is that what you mean? I couldn't remember whether it was you or Mr. Clayton who had asked me. Perhaps it was both of you. But I can't see why you should bother about that sort of thing at dinner. Why don't you wait until the dance. It would be so much better form. Fancy saying 'No' to a man, and then putting a piece of a harmless little lamb in one's mouth."

"Are you going to say 'No'?"

"Gracious! you are insistent! How should I know what I am going to say? Go on and eat, and stop hanging on my words, or I won't answer you at all. It is so fearfully conspicuous."

Even in his suspense the man could not but return. "Whence this new-found dislike to being conspicuous?"

Miss Gurdon smiled slowly, and began to answer, but a voice from across the table stopped her.

"What is it, Captain Lawrence?" she asked.

"Have you heard of Lieutenant Dudley's death?"

"No. Is he dead?"

"He died at Dover, a week ago."

"I'm so sorry; but, frankly, I don't think a dinner-table the place for funeral notices," she rebuked him.

He disliked her, and she saw the purpose of his announcement. Her dead-white skin could turn no whiter, and her smiling red lips were painted.

"Cold-hearted devil," the captain murmured as he turned back to the man at her side.

"So you want me to marry you? I will. But I want you to understand why. It is because I have just been told that the only man I have ever loved or ever will love is dead. Do you want me—knowing that?"

"Even knowing that—yes."

"Very well."

She spoke across the table again.

"Captain Lawrence, do you happen to know how Mr. Dudley died? We might as well have the coroner's verdict, since you have given us the other notices."

"He died of drink," he told her mercilessly.

"I never knew that he drank."

"He never did until he went back from here a year ago. He took to it furiously after that, and would have been dismissed if he had not died, probably. Can you account for it?"

Miss Gurdon smiled.

"Perhaps he fancied he was quaffing the waters of Lethe," she said. ARCHIBALD MANNING.

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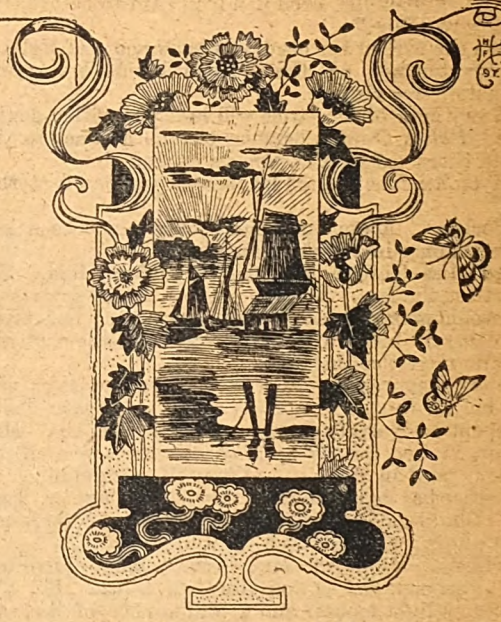

I.

The Governor's "At Home" was nearly over, and most of the guests were being conveyed in their hammocks down the streets of Freetown, the principal place in the colony of Sierra Leone.

The few remaining on the lawn in the front of Government House were mostly young Englishmen, and, judging from the merriment, they were in excellent spirits, despite the usually depressing effect of the West African climate.

Lady Mainwaring, the Governor's wife, was in their midst, and seemed to be enjoying their humours as much as any; indeed, she was largely responsible for much of the fun, and seemed loth to let them go. But at last the final farewell was said, and the young fellows departed in groups of three and four to their various quarters.

"You're not going home, surely?" exclaimed one man of the last group in surprise when, as they reached the road, two of their number were about to turn aside.

"I think we'd better," said a quiet-looking man, and the elder of the two, "I don't want to be late."

"Rot!" ejaculated the first speaker, Captain Tardrew by name. "Come round to my 'digs' for a cocktail first. It won't get dark for quite two hours yet. You'll come, won't you, Watts?" addressing Pacey's companion.

"Yes; come on," replied Watts. "I don't want to go back yet," and he linked his arms through Pacey's and drew him back.

A few minutes later they all four mounted the steps of the bungalow, where Captain Tardrew and Lieutenant Roberts lived, and commenced a second jollification on their own account.

Cocktails were handed round, and the afternoon discussed, and then Roberts got out his banjo.

In the middle of his song, the head of a pineapple suddenly fell among them, followed by a second, which hit Tardrew on the head.

"If you fellows don't mind what you're up to," he shouted through the window, after carefully concealing himself, "we'll have you in and make you drink three cocktails apiece, without stopping."

Meanwhile Roberts stepped out on the veranda with one of the pineapple heads, and with a carefully-aimed shot, hit a white sun helmet lurking behind some shrubs, full on the crown.

This was the signal for a general stampede, and in the end the two offenders were dragged forcibly into the bungalow, and after being well pummeled, made to join the fun. Of course the others had to have a second cocktail to keep them company, and then followed more songs, and it was only after a full hour and a half that Pacey succeeded in dragging Watts away.

They were living together at some little distance from the town, and were at work on the government railway. Pacey was sectional engineer, and Watts his colleague, and, when they could, they were glad to put in a little time in Freetown, for it was dull enough up the country.

At the same time, it was inadvisable to stay late, as they had a difficult journey to make over an almost impassable road, and Pacey was anxious to start.

But when Watts was once wound up, there was no holding him, and nothing would do but he must throw something at Rackham's windows, in whose quarters music and merriment were also the order of the hour.

Pacey groaned inwardly, for he knew what this meant, but like everyone else, he was very fond of careless, happy-go-lucky Watts, and only begged him good-naturedly not to keep him up all night.

When Rackham and his friends discovered who it was outside, they instantly hailed them with delight, for no one could beat Watts at a comic song, and his company was always sought at jovial gatherings. Meanwhile, two of the most energetic ran down the steps and succeeded in dragging both men back with them.

"Good old Watts!"

"Bravo, Watty!" and "Come on, you chaps," sounded from all sides, and then everybody had to have another cocktail, and after singing, Watts had to mimic the Governor for them, which he did, eliciting roars of laughter.

But at last Pacey got him away and they made for their hammocks, accompanied by three or four others, also going homewards.

The start had yet to be accomplished, however, and it took considerably longer than it need have done, for

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Watts experienced a good deal of difficulty in getting into his hammock, and his four black bearers seemed in no way disposed to help him. To begin with, he made a violent plunge and went head first out the other side. The second attempt found him clinging underneath, and in struggling to right himself, he caught hold of Pacey's hammock.

Pacey being unprepared, this resulted in precipitating him unexpectedly to the ground, and Watts on the top of him, to the infinite amusement of their companions and the bearers, and it was full fifteen minutes before the actual start was made.

Then followed a rough journey over a dreary road, and a sigh of thanksgiving from both men when the bungalow was reached without further mishap. They found letters awaiting them and each settled himself cosily to peruse the home news.

Suddenly Pacey sprang up with an exclamation of delight, and Watts gazed at him in blank astonishment, for any suggestion of excitement was unusual in his quiet, steady-going friend.

"What's up? Got a fortune?" he asked with his lazy good-natured smile.

"Not quite," replied Pacey, smiling to himself as he continued eagerly to peruse his letter.

Watts watched him a few moments, then remarked:

"Well, are you going to tell me? You're a nice chap to get a fellow worked up to bursting point and then offer no explanation."

Pacey laughed, for his friend's attitude alone, to say nothing of his drawl, suggested anything but a state of excitement.

Then he sat on the table, drew a long whiff at his pipe, and remarked: "My wife's coming."

"Coming here?" queried Watts, now genuinely roused.

"Yes. She's coming out for a short stay and we are to go back together."

"By jove!" muttered Watts. "She's pretty plucky."

"Yes, rather," answered Pacey, with a light in his eye that his friend had never seen before. "She's not afraid of anything. She's got a little money of her own you know, and she says she's tired of England.

"She says it's deadly dull, and she wants a little adventure, so she's coming out here by the next boat.

"By jove! she'll be here in a week if she has a good passage," and he seemed as if he found the news too good to be true.

"I guess we shall have to tidy up a bit," remarked Watts, looking ruefully round at the chaos which reigned supreme in their quarters. There was the faintest suspicion of a shadow on his handsome face, and he rested his long legs on the table somewhat disconsolately. "I don't know how to do it, do you?"

"Oh! you needn't bother about that," replied Pacey. "Maizie won't mind. She doesn't mind anything so long as she gets a fair amount of fun. She's very lively and witty, and all that you know," he added, with unconscious pride. "She'll make the place ring if she only keeps well."

"I think I'll move back to the farm," said Watts. "You'll like to have the place to yourselves; it will be like a honeymoon."

"Nonsense, man. Maizie and I are not a soft spoony couple at all. She'd much rather you stayed; she's so fond of company."

Watts looked slightly dubious.

He didn't know much about girls, but he always considered them a bit in the way. As a matter of fact, his irrepressible spirits and careless temperament had more than once got him into difficulties with the fair sex, upon which occasions he always vowed and declared it had not been his fault at all, and that he was only having a bit of fun. At the same time it was rather trying, and so he made solemn vows to avoid their society, and have his larks with his own sex.

"I think I'll go," he said, after a pause, "there isn't much room here. I'll come in to dinner in the evenings. It'll be rather fine, won't it? You're a lucky chap."

"Yes," assented Pacey, his plain, manly face, still glowing with suppressed delight. He did not show well beside his handsome, broad-shouldered companion, who was everybody's favourite, but the weak, almost girlish mouth of the latter, and the firm, strong lips of the former, told clearly where the worth lay.

"She's a grand little girl, all laughter and sunshine and fun, and as pretty as they are made. What on earth she married a dull chap like me for, I don't know!"

"Rot!" ejaculated Watts. "She was a wise woman, and knew a good fellow when she saw one. I'm going to turn in now. Here, Que!" and he shouted to a small black boy, who was half asleep in the kitchen. "Come and take my boots off."

Meanwhile the good ship *Angola* breasted the waves and made a quick passage towards the West Coast. She had not many passengers, but among them was a lady, and that was not usual for a West African ship. The passengers generally consisted of from four to twelve men, who got very sick of the monotony and sometimes of each other and everything else.

But this journey the *Angola* was in luck's way, for besides her male passengers she carried a lady who was a host in herself. It was impossible to be dull for long with Maizie Pacey on board, for she was not only never still herself, but never let anyone else be still if she could help it. She organised cricket and rounders in the mornings, flirtations and round games in the afternoons, music and more flirtations in the evenings. She corrupted the captain and the first mate with her winsome ways, and did practically whatever she liked with everybody and everything.

But this was nothing new, for Maizie always had done whatever she liked, and it took a heart of iron to resist her coaxing moods.

Moreover, to thwart her invariably meant redoubling her determination, and that was partly why she was plain, quiet, Tom Pacey's wife.

She was attracted to him because they told her he never took any notice of girls, and someone remarked it would take a clever woman to make an impression on him. Maizie said nothing, but she took it into her head to be that woman. When she had got him practically at her feet she would have been content to well-nigh break the poor fellow's heart and let him go, which in the end would have been much better for him; but, unfortunately, opposition was raised, and because she would have her own way Maizie married Tom Pacey.

Not that she had no love for him; but the danger lay in his kind heart. He forgave and overlooked too easily.

It was no craving for his society that brought her out now to the West Coast. It was just a freak in search of adventure. It was her first sea voyage, and after a few days she began to enjoy herself thoroughly, blissfully indifferent to everything except the pleasure of the hour.

At Canary she had been so busy amusing herself that she kept the ship waiting for her, and then stepped

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aboard with a merry little laugh, remarking she was so hungry she didn't know what to do with herself. When they reached the Kru Coast she was so delighted with the Kru canoes that came out to the ship that she wanted to go for a trip in one of them, while they waited for her.

The canoes clustered by the vessel, and the boys took charge of them, while their fathers or brothers made bargains with the outward bound Englishmen for their services, and it needed all the captain's persuasive powers to prevent her "buying a boy," as she called it, and taking him on to Sierra Leone.

In the evening, when her husband and his friend read their letters, she was a good deal nearer than they supposed, and already the passengers were beginning to deplore her fast-approaching departure. Maizie professed to be sorry too, but when there was a cry of "Land ahoy!" she was the first to rush forward, exclaiming: "Where? Where?"

The captain lent her his telescope, and she looked up into the sky and declared they were mistaken.

Then she turned it to the water, ran it over the whole face of the ocean and heavens, and emphatically persisted that everyone was wrong.

When, after a long time, she was made to see the narrow strip of coast-line, she remarked: "What a fuss to make about a scrap like that!" and went back to her guitar, which she had hastily thrown down.

The next morning the *Angola* reached Freetown, and when she hove in sight Philip Watts stood alone on the quay, looking across the sea.

He was lounging against a wall, with his hands in his pockets, in his usual fashion, but there was a shade of anxiety in his face. He had left Tom Pacey behind, down with fever, and come to meet his wife for him, and he did not relish the undertaking at all.

"I wonder if she'll faint or go into hysterics," he mused. "She's pretty sure to think he's dying, or some rot like that, and what on earth am I to do with her if she does?"

When the steamer drew near, he went out in one of small boats, in which the passengers are landed, to meet it, and his spirits did not improve. Maizie was leaning over the side, laughing delightedly at the niggers, and throwing biscuits into their boats, and when she saw Watts she remarked to her companion: "What a good-looking man;" then added, "I wonder where Tom is, and how he thinks I'm going to get to land if he doesn't fetch me?" Then she aimed a biscuit at a nigger, and clapped her hands because it hit him in the face.

When Watts asked for her she was still amusing herself, and he could not help smiling when he saw her occupation.

"Her husband's down with fever; I've come to meet her for him," he told the captain.

"That good-looking man who just rowed up?" said Maizie in reply to the captain a moment later. "How considerate of Tom to choose such a nice escort," and she went forward with a bright smile.

"He isn't very bad," stammered Watts, after the first formalities. He had made up a hundred carefully worded sentences in which to calm her anxious fears, but, as is generally the case, forgot them all at the supreme moment.

"Poor old fellow, I've no doubt he'll soon be all right," she said brightly. "You're always having fever out here, aren't you? I don't suppose you think anything of it at all. Am I to get my luggage into that little boat or did you think of drawing it behind in the water?"

Watts laughed with a huge sense of relief, and in ten minutes they were the best friends in the world.

"Shall we get overturned in the surf?" she asked as they approached the land.

Watts reassured her, saying there was no danger.

"I'm rather sorry," she replied, "because I have come out here for adventure, and it's a pity to waste any time. I've got on an old frock purposely," and she laughed merrily.

When they were finally landed, he had the greatest difficulty to make her see that her luggage was selected right, because she had discovered two little fat niggers behind a boat, and was busily engaged in making friendly overtures to them with biscuits.

Then, as they walked to the hammocks, she would stand still and gaze at everything that took her fancy, and Watts, already under the spell of her beauty, was nothing loth to spin out the journey.

One nigger they saw, wearing a white linen shirt as an outer garment and a tall hat, and another, with an old umbrella cover round his neck in the form of a cape, sent her into convulsions, and she was most anxious to go and look for further curiosities in the town. But at last they started off, and presently reached the little bungalow, with its dense background of foliage, and in two minutes Maizie was flying up the steps.

Philip watched her through the open window, and he saw her husband raise himself and hold out his arms: then Maizie tripped prettily up to him, and let him fold her to his heart, and Philip turned away with something of a lonely feeling to see after her luggage. He supposed they would not want him any more, and was about to set off to the farm where he had moved his quarters, when he heard light footsteps behind him and saw a flutter of white muslin.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," she exclaimed. "I want to explore dreadfully, and I'm afraid to go alone. But these niggers don't eat people, do they?" and she raised a bewitching pair of laughing blue eyes to his face.

A few minutes later, they were scrambling over waterfalls and banks, and were generally enjoying themselves like two children.

"What a perfect spot!" she exclaimed delightedly, as she stood and gazed at the mountain stream, which sped on its way through the garden. "I'm sure I shall never want to go home again. I call this a heavenly place. Are there any monkeys? Do find one for me, I'm so fond of them! I shall get them to come and eat biscuits."

"They won't take much persuasion," laughed Watts; "but what with niggers and monkeys, I doubt if you have any biscuits left to-morrow. Both, as a rule, help themselves to anything they happen to fancy."

Then he gave her his hand and helped her to spring across a ditch, in order to get a nearer view of a native hut, where some little black babies were playing about while their mothers squatted and gossiped.

Later on, after making him play and sing to her and her husband, she walked to the gate with him, and as they went, they chaffed each other and laughed gaily. The sick man heard them from his bed, and smiled softly to himself.

"I'm glad Watts is here," he said. "She won't be likely to get dull with him to amuse her, and I want her to enjoy herself."

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II.

Three weeks later the governor gave another "At Home" as a farewell before going away on leave. Nearly every European in the colony was present, and among them Maizie with her usual little band of followers.

She had been fêted right and left, and made a veritable little queen of during those three weeks, in spite of the fact that her husband had not been well enough to go about with her.

Maizie was not conventional in London, so she was hardly likely to be in Freetown, and the consequence was her husband had to content himself with her company in the mornings, and rarely at any other time.

He was too kind to object, and only said he didn't mind so long as she enjoyed herself, and listened with tenderness and pleasure when she came home and gave a spirited account of her adventures.

From what she told him, and from the amount of callers, it was easy to see how much she was admired, and he was glad and proud of it.

And Maizie thought of nothing at all, but what a good time she was having. She wanted to go everywhere and see everything, and the climax of her delights was a journey along the new railway, when Philip let her drive the engine, and when they stayed out together for hours, and picnicked by a mountain torrent.

Afterwards she let him lie with his head in her lap, and they chatted about many things, and were very happy together; while the sick man at home sat on the veranda and tried to get back his strength, that he might go out with her and see her triumph.

And meanwhile a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which had come upon the horizon of three lives, loomed larger and heavier.

The morning of the Governor's "At Home" Tom Pacey got up early and walked about to show them how strong he was, for he had set his heart on going. Maizie said little, but Philip encouraged him, and at last half-lifted him into a hammock.

But the journey proved too great a strain, and after a short distance he was obliged to turn back and go home.

Maizie kissed him, and he looked at her wistfully. She looked so lovely in her dainty white frock, with white shoes and stockings and a large white sun hat, he would have given anything to take her.

"Don't stay very late," he said longingly, "and you'll look after her, Watts, old fellow."

Watts was tying up his shoe-lace with a white face and set lips, and he answered without looking up. Maizie glanced from one to the other, and went a little pale herself, but she only laughed lightly and clambered back into her hammock.

At the Government House her friends quickly gathered round her, and she chatted as gaily as usual, but the colour did not come back to her cheeks, and she knew that Philip Watts never left her side for a moment, and was glad.

The Governor made pretty speeches to her, and Lady Mainwaring congratulated her on having so successfully baffled the deadly climate, and Maizie answered in her pretty way, and kept her cavaliers busy waiting upon her. But to Philip Watts she uttered no commands; she seemed scarcely to speak to him at all; yet there was that in her manner when she did address him, and in his attitude when he replied, which told that the seeming carelessness was not the result of indifference.

Afterwards they stood together in the shade of some palm trees and watched the moonlight on the sea.

In all the quarters near they could hear the laughter and music which generally followed a reception, but they paid no heed to it, standing there hand in hand under the palm trees.

Once Maizie shivered, and then her companion folded her wrap more closely round her, and afterwards he let his arm rest across her shoulders.

"Are you really going the day after to-morrow?" she asked at last.

"Yes," he replied, and her eyes fell before his.

She moved a little nearer.

"I don't know whatever I shall do," she said. "Tom won't be well enough to take me about, and I can't go alone. Are you obliged to go?"

"Only because of you."

"Because of me?" she asked; "but I want you to stay."

"If I did I should shoot myself," he answered in a low voice, with a little hard laugh.

She laughed, too, a hollow, mirthless laugh, and her teeth began to chatter nervously.

"It's been so jolly!" she breathed at last.

"Too jolly," he replied bitterly. "How do you suppose I can just go away and be without you, and know that I can never see you again? When I think of it, I feel as if I should go crazy. It is because of it I *must* go on Friday. I daren't stay."

She looked up again into his face and pressed a little closer, and this time her eyes did not fall, but drank in the love from his.

And Philip Watts went down like a reed in his hour of temptation, and folded her to his heart.

Like many another, circumstances proved too strong for his fatal weakness of character, and he bartered honour, self-respect, and the sacred claims of friendship for the sake of a woman's kiss.

"I can't leave you, Maizie—I can't!" he murmured, and a suspicious glisten shone in his eyes.

"I don't want you to," she answered firmly, and rested her curly head on his breast.

When they got home Tom was waiting up for them, but Maizie came in alone.

"You are very late," he said gently.

She glanced at the clock with an air of unconcern, and appeared surprised at the hour.

"We could not get away," she said. "Everyone wanted us to go in for just a few minutes, and, of course, that meant nearly half-an-hour. I'm sorry you sat up."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," he replied a little drearily.

"You are dull?" she asked.

"I'm so wretched at not being able to go about with you," he said, with a break in his voice. "It's the worst piece of ill-luck I ever had in my life, getting this confounded fever just now."

"It is hard lines," she replied, and then complained that she was too tired to tell him about the function that night.

Two days later the *Cabenda* took up two passengers from Freetown; the one a tall, good-looking man, and the other a slight girlish form, wearing a thick white veil, and apparently without any luggage.

Those who saw her embark in the boat from the shore, expected her to return with it, and in the bustle and confusion at the start, it was not at first noticed that she had not done so.

It was not until the ship was a black speck in the distance that it dawned upon certain minds in Freetown

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that Maizie Pacey had gone to England with Philip Watts.

* * * * *

Who was to tell her husband?

This was the question that burnt in the brains of those men in Freetown who were particularly his friends. Each shrank from it instinctively, and it was only pressure of circumstances that at last induced Captain Tardrew to go out to the little bungalow at Clinetown.

He found the invalid on a wicker couch by the door, eagerly watching the little garden path.

"I thought you were Maizie," he said, looking crest-fallen, as the captain came up. "She went to start Watts this morning, and I thought she would have been back hours ago. I suppose she's gone to see Colonel and Mrs. Horn—she goes there so much."

Something in his friend's manner seemed to strike him, for he added quickly: "I don't mind her going at all; I want her to get all the enjoyment she can here. Of course, its beastly awkward, having me laid me up like this, but it can't be helped, and Watts has been awfully good to her."

After inquiring after his health, Captain Tardrew sat down and commenced to draw a pattern on the floor with his stick, utterly at a loss how to proceed with his news.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Tom suddenly, and his thin hands clutched at the arms of the lounge. His whole manner expressed intense self-restraint. It seemed almost as if he were inwardly harassed with a dread that had been in his mind for some time, but determined to defend her to the end.

"I've got rather bad news," began the Captain lamely. The big fellow was at his wits' end to know how to put it, and would a thousand times rather have faced the cannon's mouth.

"What is it?" asked Tom in a strained, hollow voice. "I dare say it won't improve with keeping."

The look in his eyes frightened Captain Tardrew, and he exclaimed:

"Don't take it too much to heart, old fellow. She isn't worth it."

"Perhaps," he replied with unnatural calmness; "but you haven't told me yet what has happened," and he hid his eyes with his hand while the Captain told his story.

When he looked up at last, his face was ashy white, and his eyes stern with anguish.

"I think I'll go in," he said, and tried to raise himself.

The Captain helped him, saying almost tenderly: "You must come back to my quarters with me. I can't leave you here alone."

"You are very good, but I would rather stay," was the quiet answer; then he dropped down in a dead faint at his friend's feet.

Tardrew sent at once for the doctor, and meanwhile tended him with the gentleness of a woman.

After a long time, they brought him round, but when they spoke to him, he only turned his face to the wall in silence.

"He's in for a bad relapse," the doctor said, shaking his head gravely. "The fever was still on him, and the shock has affected the whole nervous system. We must get a nurse from Freetown a once."

"I'll stay until she comes," replied Tardrew. "It's impossible to get anyone out here to-night. Tell me what to do for him, and I'll sit up."

"If he keeps quiet like this, you needn't; but you must sleep in the room with him. I'm afraid of his getting delirious; send for me if he does."

"All right," answered the Captain, and took his seat by the bedside.

For nearly two hours he sat and watched, and all the time the stricken man lay still and quiet, seeming to be peacefully asleep.

At last, worn out by fatigue, the watcher stretched himself on the floor, and went to sleep.

A report awoke him.

The short, sharp crack of a pistol, followed by a deathly stillness.

With a nameless horror, Captain Tardrew groped for matches and struck one, and in the dim light he saw the form of his friend lying across the bed, with the pistol still grasped in his hand. Gertrude Page.

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

A considerable amount of excitement has been created by the publication of the first instalment of "The Empress of the Earth." Several readers have written to congratulate me upon its excellence. I can only assure them that the early chapters are really tame compared with what I have in hand. It is unquestionably one of the finest war stories ever published in this or any other country. The summary this week will enable you to start at once, and a word from you to your friends on the subject will evoke their gratitude.

H. L. M. T.—Nearly 60,000 acres have been reclaimed in Ireland during the past year from bog and marsh lands.

Goody.—The very sweetest orange is the black or rusty-coated fruit. Pick out the dingiest oranges in the box, and you will get the best. Another way to choose oranges is by weight. The heaviest are the best, because they have the thinnest skin and more weight of juice.

C. H. D. asks if I can tell him what margarine is made of, and if it is anything but "a vile substitute for butter."————It is nothing of the kind. Dutchmen, who make it, consider it very good stuff. It is butter made in a different way to pure Devonshire; it is, in fact, distilled kidney fat of the ox and cow, flavoured with the oil extracted from the Arachides nut, which comes from South America, and the Dutch people think so well of it that they frequently mix it with their best butter.

Ivan.—The words printed in italics in the Bible have been added by the translators to make clearer the meanings of the passages in which they occur.

I. J. R.—It is calculated that the consumption of lobsters in this country amounts to from sixty to seventy thousand a day. Most of these come from Norway.

J. M. F.—I have made inquiries, and find that many daggers are sold to women by jewellers. They are not ornaments, but serious weapons. They are just large enough to slip easily inside a woman's bodice. Some women have these made to order, when they are lavishly adorned and incrusted with precious stones. They are frequently carried in travelling, when they are intended as weapons of defence.

Housewife.—The Chinese preserve eggs by coating them with mud.

Alps.—It is an explicable fact that men buried in an avalanche of snow hear distinctly every word uttered by those who are seeking for them, while their strenuous shouts fail to penetrate even a few feet of the snow.

Benedict.—An unmarried lady in Holland always takes the right arm of her escort, while the married one selects the left side of her husband. So deeply has this custom entered into the life of Hollanders that at a church wedding the bride enters the edifice on the right side of the groom, the young wife returning on the left side of her husband when the ceremony has been performed.

Leonard.—Members of the Society of Friends are more numerous in Cheshire and Lancashire than anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Agnes.—The Gold Spider's Room is not at the Kremlin but in the palace of Potsdam. An interesting tradition attaches to this piece of work. It commemorates an incident in the life of Frederick William, the grand uncle of the present Emperor of Germany. An attempt had been made to poison him in a cup of chocolate. By chance a spider fell into the cup, and for this reason the beverage was given to a dog, who immediately upon taking it died. The cook was afterwards hanged, and the golden spider in the Potsdam palace immortalises the incident.

L. F. asks: "In what part of the United Kingdom are the most curious proper names to be found?"————Probably in the Isle of Man, where we have come across the following among others: Kewish, Quirk, Greagle, Cubbon, and Qualtrough.

W. M.—The life of a London hansom cab horse is seldom longer than two years. After that they begin to "fall off" and get lame, and end their existence in the "growler" trade, standing dejectedly for hours on a rank, with an occasional whip-up to their best pace as a fare comes along.

M.P.—In the Belgium Parliament, when a member is making a long speech, he may be supplied with brandy-and-water at the expense of the Government.

Absent-minded left his umbrella in the train the other day, and upon applying to the company's lost property office for the recovery of the same, was exceedingly astonished by the enormous number of articles stored there, which the official in charge assured him had all been left in the company's carriages in the course of a week.————Absent-mindedness does, indeed, seem to be on the increase, especially amongst railway passengers. The annual auction of unclaimed goods in the Great Eastern Railway Company is a wholesale example of the extent of the disease. Two thousand umbrellas, half that number of walking sticks, six hundred hats, bicycles, perambulators, and even feather beds were unintentionally abandoned by their owners during the past twelve months.

Grant.—Yes, the complete shilling novel and the coloured plate will be given away absolutely free with every number of *Home Notes*, commencing with that published on February 19th.

Gippy.—A good Arabian horse can canter in the desert for twenty-four hours in summer and forty-eight hours in winter without drinking.

H. M. F. wishes to be informed what weight of food a man lifts to his mouth during his lifetime.————It would need a strong arm to lift at the same time all solid and liquid food that a man of, say, seventy has consumed, for the total weight of this amounts to at least sixty tons.

Mann.—In East Indian schools mental arithmetic is a vastly more serious matter than it is in the schools of this country. Catch questions are numerous in the Orient, and the multiplication table is swollen into a mountain of difficulty by native teachers. Pupils of ten years are taught to carry the multiplication table up to forty times forty, and in order to still more complicate matters fractional parts are introduced.

Z.—Sweden is the healthiest country in Europe, and next to it in this respect comes the United Kingdom.

R. R.—Your child is plainly overworked. There is no greater mistake in the bringing up of children than keeping them at their lessons too long, and beginning to teach them too soon. Depend upon it, a child is only the worse for lessons before it is six or seven years old. It is learning something all the while, and its brain is becoming more fitted for the reception of knowledge. A young child should not be kept at work for more than three or four hours a day. It will learn just as much in that time as in seven or eight hours. When the brain is wearied it cannot assimilate knowledge satisfactorily.

G. H.—The most remarkable book in the world, so far as its appearance is concerned, is neither written nor printed. It is in the Imperial Library of Paris, and the letters are cut out of tissue paper with a pair of scissors. A sheet of blue tissue, in which the letters are cut, is placed between two pages of white, and so the matter is read.

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THE WRITER APOLOGISES.

It is a comparison I may have used before; still, it comes in handy now. We cannot always command new illustrations just because we happen to want them, can we? No. As we are obliged to wear our old clothes so long as they are at all presentable, so it is with our old forms and modes of thought. They *will* pop up in the mind, and, do what you will, you *must* employ them, or go about a sort of verbal beggar. That's the way it is with me to-night.

All of which is a sort of apology on my part for likening the human brain and stomach to the two balls or ends of a dumb-bell. Only that instead of being connected by a handle, the brain and stomach are brought into intimate association by a system of nerves. The bowels are merely a prolongation of the stomach; and *they* also are in close communication with the brain by a similar arrangement.

Thus we perceive how either is unpleasantly affected when anything goes wrong with the other. That explains why Mrs. A. E. Spencer felt "faint and light in the head" at the time she was having a miserable experience with her stomach. "For many years," she goes on to say, "I suffered from indigestion and weakness. I had no appetite for food, and, no matter how light my diet was, I had great pain after eating. I had a gnawing pain at the stomach and a feeling of cold, *as if I were starving*.

"I was often sick, and felt faint and light in the head. I got extremely weak, the food I took doing me little or no good. Now better, now worse, I continued to suffer for over twenty years. I took different medicines, but nothing gave me more than temporary relief. I then heard customers in the shop speak of Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle, and found much relief from taking it. I continued taking it, and gradually I got stronger, and could take my meals without pain. By taking an occasional dose when needed I keep in good health. You can make what use you like of this statement. (Signed) (Mrs.) A. E. Spencer (wife of Mr. Spencer, grocer), Broughton, Brigg, Lincolnshire, November 6th, 1896."

As to the feeling of "cold," to which Mrs. Spencer alludes, her own explanation is the right one. She *was* starved—not to death, of course—but to a disagreeable if not an immediately dangerous extent. Life is heat, and heat in the human body is the product of digested food. We all know how, when we feel chill and shivery from hunger, a good meal warms us. Lacking *enough* food for years, this woman's blood had grown thin and her body cold. In her physical house the fire had died down. How important to her were the chance words she heard her customers utter in the shop!

"For many years," writes another, "I always felt low, tired, and weak, and had no desire for anything. My ailment was indigestion. I had a poor appetite, and what little food I ate gave me pain at the stomach and chest. No kind of food agreed with me, and *I dreaded the sight of it*. I was afraid to eat. I often sat down to the table and could scarcely eat a mouthful. I did not sleep well at night, and felt worse tired in the morning than when I went to bed. I got so weak I could barely go about the house. None of the medicines I tried did much to relieve me.

"In October, 1894, I received by post a small book in which I read about Mother Seigel's Syrup, and what it had done for others. I got a bottle from Mr. Soulsby, grocer, Newfield, and after taking it improved very much. I could eat, my food agreed with me, and I rested better. After having taken the Syrup a short time, I became strong and all pain left me. Since then, by taking an occasional dose, I keep in good health and can eat anything. You can publish this statement as you like. (Signed) (Mrs.) Harriet Wright, 12, Challies Street, Newfield, Willington, near Durham, Oct. 30th, 1896."

These cases, and others like them, tend to throw light upon many of the head and brain complaints people are troubled with. Stomach wrong, head wrong; that's the rule. So, in addition to the pain and distress in the digestive organs themselves, we have pain and trouble in the head, through what the medical men call "reflex nervous action." Now, when Mother Seigel's Syrup is appealed to for help in conditions of this sort, it doesn't bother itself with the ailments above the shoulders. It goes straight down into the diseased stomach, and soon has both ends of the dumb-bell in first-class working order.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 478. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 26TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

BOVRIL

Contains in a highly concentrated and easily digestible form the direct nourishment of prime Ox Beef, and fortifies the system against

INFLUENZA;

but if, unfortunately, this disease holds us in its "grip,"

BOVRIL

is prescribed by all leading Physicians to hasten

RECOVERY.

BOVRIL LIMITED, Food Specialists & Hospital Purveyors, **LONDON.**

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Chairman—**THE RIGHT HON. LORD PLAYFAIR, G.C.B., LL.D.**

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NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger Lemon, Orange, Blackberry etc.

YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 478. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending Feb. 26th, 1898.

Panther Eyes.

A MAN and a woman—Nature had done the grouping—sat on a rustic seat in the later afternoon.

The man was middle-aged, slender, swarthy, with the expression of a poet and the complexion of a pirate—a man at whom one would look again.

The woman was young, blond, and graceful, with something in her figure and movements suggesting the word "lithe." She was dressed in a grey gown with odd brown marking in the texture. She may have been beautiful. One could not readily say, for her eyes denied attention to all else. They were grey-green, long and narrow, with an expression defying analysis. One could only know that they were disquieting.

The man and the woman talked.

"Yes," said the woman, "I love you, Heaven knows. But marry you, no! I cannot—will not!"

"Irene, you have said that many times, yet always have denied me a reason. I've a right to know; to prove my fortitude if I have it. Give me a reason."

"For loving you?"

"A reason for not marrying me—I've a right to know. I will know!"

He had risen and was standing before her with clenched hands, on his face a scowl. He looked as if he might attempt to learn by strangling her. She sat looking up into his face with a fixed, set expression that was utterly without emotion or sentiment. Yet it had something in it that tamed his resentment and made him shiver.

"You are determined to have my reason?" she asked in a tone that was entirely mechanical.

"If you please—if I'm not asking too much."

"Very well, you shall know. I am insane!"

Then she told him her story:

Edited By C. Arthur Pearson

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In a little log house containing a single room sparely and rudely furnished, crouching on the floor against one of the walls, lived Charles Marlowe, his wife and child.

Marlowe was of the now extinct class of Canadian pioneersmen who found their most acceptable surroundings in sylvan solitudes. With Charles Marlowe in the wilderness, sharing the dangers, hardships, and privations of that strange life, were his wife and child, to whom he was passionately attached. The woman was still young enough to be comely, new enough to the awful isolation of her lot to be cheerful. By withholding the large capacity for happiness which the simple satisfactions of the forest life could not have filled, Providence had dealt well with her. In her light household tasks, her child, her husband, and a few books, she found abundant provision for her needs.

One morning in midsummer, Marlowe took down his rifle from the wooden hooks on the wall and signified his intention of getting game.

"We've meat enough," said the wife. "Please don't go out to-day. I dreamt last night, oh, such a dreadful thing! I cannot recollect it, but I'm almost sure that it will come to pass if you go hunting."

Marlowe laughed.

"Try to remember," he said. "Perhaps you dreamt that baby had lost the power of speech."

The woman yielded. Lacking the gift of humour, she could not hold out against his kindly badinage. So, with a kiss for the mother and a kiss for the child, he left the house and closed the door upon his happiness for ever.

At nightfall he had not returned. The woman prepared supper and waited. Then she put baby to bed and sang softly to her until she slept. By this time the fire on the hearth had burnt out, and the room was lighted by a single candle. This she afterwards placed in the open window as a sign and welcome to the hunter if he should approach from that side.

As the night wore on she became not less anxious, but more drowsy, and at last rested her arms upon the bed by the child and her head upon the arms. The candle in the window burnt down to the socket, sputtered and flared a moment, and went out unobserved, for the woman slept, and sleeping she dreamt.

Her dreams were of trouble and disaster, and she awoke with a start and a cry of fear. As a sense of her actual surroundings came slowly back to her, she felt for the child and assured herself by its breathing that all was well with it. Then, moved by some impulse for which she probably could not have accounted, she rose and took the sleeping babe in her arms holding it close against her breast.

The head of the child's cot was against the wall to which the woman now turned her back as she stood.

Lifting her eyes, she saw two bright objects starring the darkness with a reddish-green glow. She took them to be two coals on the hearth, but with her returning sense of direction, came the disquieting consciousness that they were not in that quarter of the room, moreover were too high, being nearly at the level of her eyes. She looked fixedly at the objects and shivered. They were the eyes of a panther.

The beast was at the open window directly opposite and not five paces away. Nothing but those terrible eyes were visible, but in the dreadful tumult of her feelings as the situation disclosed itself to her understanding she somehow knew that the animal was standing on its hind feet, supporting itself with its paws on the window-ledge.

Her knees failed her, and by degrees, instinctively striving to avoid a sudden movement that might bring the beast upon her, she sank to the floor, crouched against the wall, and tried to shield the babe with her trembling body without withdrawing her gaze from the luminous orbs that were killing her.

No thought of her husband came to her in her agony, no hope or suggestion to rescue or escape. She could think of nothing but the danger to her babe.

Motionless now and in absolute silence, she waited her doom, the moments growing to hours, to years, and still those devilish eyes maintained their watch.

Returning to his cabin late at night with a deer on his shoulder Charles Marlowe tried the door. It did not yield. He knocked. There was no answer. He laid down his deer and went round to the window. As he turned the angle of the building he fancied he heard a sound as of stealthy footfalls and a rustling in the undergrowth of the forest, but they were too slight for certainty even to his practised ear.

Approaching the window, and, to his surprise, finding it open, he threw his leg over the sill and entered. All was darkness and silence! He groped his way to the fireplace, struck a match and lit a candle. Then he looked about.

Cowering on the floor against a wall was his wife, clasping his child. As he sprang towards her she broke into laughter, long, loud, and mechanical, devoid of gladness and devoid of sense—the laughter that is not out of keeping with the clanking of a chain. Hardly knowing what he did, he extended his arms. She laid the babe in them. It was dead—passed to death in its mother's embrace. That is what occurred during a night in a forest, but not all of it did Irene Marlowe relate to Jenner Brading; not all of it was known to her. When she had concluded, the sun was below the horizon, and the long summer twilight had begun to deepen in the hollows of the land. For some moments Brading was silent, expecting the narrative to be carried forward to some definite connection with the conversation introducing it, but the narrator was as silent as he, her face averted, her hands clasping and unclasping themselves, as they lay in her lap.

"It is a sad, a terrible story," said Brading at last, "but I do not understand. You call Charles Marlowe, father; that I know. That he is old before his time, broken by some sorrow, I have seen, But, pardon me, you said that you—that you——"

"That I am insane," said the girl, without a movement of head or body.

"But, Irene, you say—please, dear, do not look away from me—you say that the child was dead, not demented."

"Yes, that one. I am the second. I was born three months after that night."

Brading was again silent. He was a trifle dazed and could not at once think of the right thing to say. Her face was still turned away. In his embarrassment he reached impulsively towards the hands that lay closing and unclosing in her lap, but something—he could not have said what—restrained him. He then remembered vaguely that he had never altogether cared to take her hand.

"Is it likely," she resumed, "under such circumstances that I could be quite—sane!"

Brading did not reply. He was preoccupied with a new thought that was taking shape in his mind—a

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theory. It might throw a light, albeit a lurid one, upon such doubt of her sanity as her own assertion had not dispelled.

In a country which was still new and sparsely populated, many stories of animals were current, and he suddenly remembered one that had caused its little excitement, but to which he had paid no attention at the time. Its likeness to the story to which he had just listened now impressed him as perhaps more than accidental. For it was of a panther which had glared through the window of a house; was it not possible that the one story had in some way suggested the other?

Brading recalled certain circumstances of the girl's history and disposition of which, with love's simplicity, he had hitherto been heedless, such as her solitary life with her father, and her strange fear of the night. Surely in such a mind imagination once kindled might burn with a lawless flame, penetrating and enveloping the entire structure. That she was mad, he could no longer doubt. She had only mistaken an effect of her mental disorder for its cause, bringing into imaginary relation with her own personality the vagaries of the local mythmakers.

With some vague intention of testing his new "theory," and no very definite notion of how to set about it, he said gravely, but with hesitation:

"Irene, dear, tell me—I beg you will not take offence, but tell me."

"I have told you," she interrupted, speaking with a passionate earnestness that he had not known her to show. "I have already told you that we cannot marry. Is anything else worth saying?"

Before he could stop her she had sprung from her seat and without another word was gliding away among the trees towards her father's house.

He stood watching her in silence until she had vanished in the gloom. Suddenly he started as if he had been shot. His face took on an expression of amazement and alarm. In one of the black shadows into which she had disappeared he had caught a quick, brief glimpse of gleaming eyes! For an instant he was dazed and irresolute, then pulling a pistol from his pocket he dashed into the wood after her shouting: "Irene, Irene, look out! The panther, the panther!"

In a moment he had passed through the fringe of forest into open ground, and saw the girl's grey skirt vanishing into her father's door. No panther was visible.

* * * * *

Jenner Brading, attorney-at-law, lived in a cottage at the edge of the town. Directly behind the dwelling was the forest.

Brading's bedroom was at the rear of the house with a single window facing the forest. One night he was awakened by a noise at the window. He could hardly have said what it was like. With a little shrill of the nerves he sat up in bed and laid hold of the revolver which he had put under his pillow. The room was in absolute darkness, but he knew where to direct his eyes, and there he held them, awaiting in silence what further might occur.

He could now dimly discern the aperture in the window a square of lighter black. Suddenly there appeared at its lower edge two gleaming eyes that turned with a malignant lustre, inexpressibly horrible. Brading's heart gave a great jump, then seemed to stand still. A chill passed along his spine and through his hair. He felt the blood forsake his cheeks. He could not have cried out, but being a man of courage he would not have done so if he could.

Slowly the glowing eyes rose with a steady motion that seemed an approach, and slowly rose Brading's right hand holding the pistol! He fired!

Blinded by the flash and stunned by the report, Brading nevertheless heard, or fancied that he heard, the wild, high scream of the panther, so human in sound. Leaping from the bed, he hastily dressed himself, and, pistol in hand, sprang from the door, meeting two or three men who came running up from the road.

A brief explanation was followed by a cautious search at the rear of the house. The grass was wet with dew. Beneath the window it had been trodden and partly levelled for a wide space, from which a devious trail, visible in the light of a lantern, led away into the bushes.

While they were proceeding, Brading stumbled and fell upon his hands, which as he rose and rubbed them together were wet and sticky. On examination they were seen to be red with blood.

An encounter unarmed with a wounded panther was not agreeable to their taste. All but Brading turned back. He, with lantern and pistol, pushed courageously forward into the wood. Passing through a difficult undergrowth, he came into a small opening, and there his courage had its reward, for there he found the body of his victim.

But it was not a panther. What it was is told, even to this day, upon a weather-stained headstone in the village churchyard and for many years was attested daily at the graveside by the bent figure and sorrow-seamed face of old Marlowe, to whose soul and to the soul of his strange, unhappy child, be peace—peace and reparation.

MARTIN SERFUS.

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THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately runs her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to face the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain.

CHAPTER VII.

In the Channel.

Dr. Yen How had his Idea; and John Hardy had his. Nothing in the world is of such supreme importance as an Idea.

Dr. Yen How's Idea was: that the cupidity and blind greed of the white races could be used by the yellow man as a means to the yellow man's triumph; the white races could be made to exterminate each other preparatory to the sweep, in hundreds of millions, of the yellow man over an exhausted and decimated Europe. Hence the grants by China of territories to Russia, Germany, and France—and the consequent war.

John Hardy's Idea was: that the New Naval Warfare admitted of every bit as much delicate skill and shrewd sea-tactics as the Old; that the sailor-hero was still possible—the new Drake, the new Richard Grenville, the new Nelson; that it was not (as everyone believed) a mere question of weight of metal, or superiority of gun-fire now any more than it ever was; that a man born with the sea in his soul, and the sea-breeze in his hair, like the old sailor-souls, would still do the trick.

This was his Idea; and he had also this other, subsidiary to that first one—had it more vitally than any other modern Briton: that nothing in the world was of the least importance, except England, and the march of England, and the glory of England.

Perhaps the lad was utterly unconscious that he had these ideas—but he had them; they were there in him, radically and profoundly; and if he was unconscious of them, as he was of his kidneys, or his liver, that was an added proof of their radicalness and profoundity.

His nature was as elementary, and simple, and strong, as the nature of Dr. Yen How.

Just as the captain of the *Jupiter* flung his hand irritably and turned away from him, John Hardy caught the sleeve of a middy who was hurrying past, and said eagerly:

"I have got permission to see the row, after all!"

"Good biz," the middy nodded, as he passed on. "I wish you joy!"

And presently he was at the sleeve of a sub., saying:

"Here I am, you see. I have got permission to look on at the row, after all!"

"It is like your ubiquitous luck, Hardy," the other said, and hurried by.

John Hardy was usually more taciturn and retiring than this; the fact that he went about in this way volunteering the news about himself showed that he was more or less excited, out of himself. He was going to see a fight—a real one this time. Up to this moment he had no idea what a naval battle was actually like. Summer Manœuvres were quite a different affair.

His coldly practical nature was illustrated by the fact that the grudging quality of the captain's permission did not at all lessen his satisfaction; he had got it—that was enough. He looked only at results.

The object of the enemy was to effect a landing at Shoreham, or near it—a quiet spot, less conspicuous than Brighton or Worthing. They hoped by their prompt and

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sudden arrival, so soon after the declaration of war, to catch the British Fleet napping—as, in fact, they partially did—and so to be able to land three Corps d'Armée—consisting of 120,000 men, 360 guns, 30,000 horses, and a fairly adequate commissariat and field-transport *matériel*, without the inconvenience of first of all undergoing a naval engagement.

Their sudden presence on the shores of Britain proved that war must have been secretly premeditated and prepared for by them some time before the declaration of hostilities—another indication of that suspicion of treachery which, all through, characterised the action of the Allies in this war. But the excellent telescopes of the coast-guards, and the brisk scouts of the British fleet, served to give a warning which, though late, was not hopelessly so. The enemy, moreover, in their over-confidence, had committed an error in tactics in approaching too near the coast while there was still a little twilight.

Off Bognor the captains and commanders of all ships in the Channel Squadron were assembled in the large ward-room of the *Magnificent*. Rear-Admiral John Fellowes had signalled half-speed, and summoned them to a conference.

The officers sat round him, hanging eagerly on his words, as the Rear-Admiral began to speak.

"Of course, gentlemen," he said, "it has been a matter of anxious consideration to me in what formation we are to approach the enemy. What makes our arrangements rather difficult is the fact that we know little at the moment of their present disposition. But it seems to me that one thing should be certain—namely, that their troopships and liners will be stationed well in the rear, while the whole weight of metal of their ships of war will be put forward to protect their land-forces on the liners. They will naturally assume that our first care and trouble will be to destroy their land-forces in our panic at the idea of invasion, and their whole effort will be bent upon protecting them, and frustrating us.

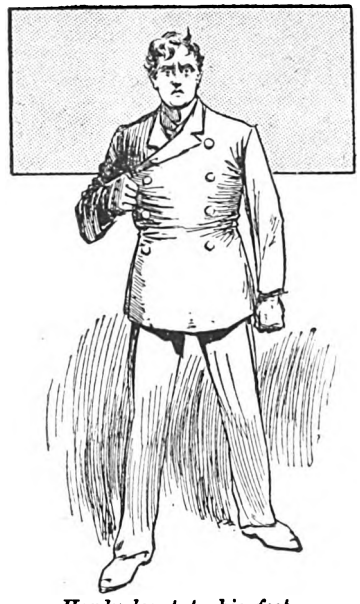
"Of course, in thus guessing our objects they are right enough. We wish, naturally, to baulk the present attempt at invasion; but I must point out to you that our object, to be wise, *must* be two-fold, and that our secondary object is more important than our first. I mean, that from the reports we have received of the number of transports, it is impossible that the enemy can have with them a land-force of more than 120,000 to 160,000 men, and that, even supposing these effect a landing, the land forces at present in Britain are possibly quite capable of dealing with them, *provided* the enemy be not reinforced by fresh increments of invading army-corps in the very near future.

"It must, then, be our business to make such fresh invasions impracticable for some little time by shattering, as far as we can, the enemy's powers of convoy, that is, their battleships. For I need not point out to you that the combined countries of France, Russia, and Germany may place several millions of armed men in England, practically as fast as they choose, *if* only they have ships to bring them over, *and* a convoy to protect them from the battleships and coast defence ironclads lying at British stations. And against such forces the land force of Britain would, of course, be impotent.

"This, then, is my point of view. We must send back our invaders with such a rip in their clattered metal that these particular battleships shall have had enough of invasion for some little time.

"In the effort we shall all probably perish, but that, I take it, is not with any of us a matter of salient importance.

"What I propose is this: That we approach to within five miles of the enemy in our present formation; if they approach us in line, or in a semi-circle convex or concave, then we echelon right and left respectively, each battleship fastening on the nearest antagonist as fortune may decide, while gunboats, torpedo-boats, and fast third-class cruisers like the *Pelorus*, will deploy right and left in an attempt to get behind the enemy, where they will do all the damage they can, special attention being given to the destruction of rudders and screws, so as to obviate their ramming-power.



Hardy leapt to his feet.

"If, on the other hand, they confront us in file, then we retain our formation, the first ship attacking the first, the second the second, and so on.

"My instructions at present cannot, of course, but be general, and much, in any case, must be left to individual initiative — happily so, I think, in the case of British commanders. Further orders will, if necessary, be sent out by trumpet-call, and passed from ship to ship in both files."

A bow of acquiescence went all round the table. The policy was felt to be bad for the immediate present, but wise for the immediate future.

At that moment the flag-lieutenant of the Rear-Admiral entered the room.

"The enemy's fleet is reported in sight, sir," he said.

"Ah! what is the hour?"

"Nearly three bells, sir—second dog-watch."

"What has been made out?"

"Only three electric search-lights in a line—probably they are fifteen miles off."

"Are preparations well advanced on board?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the same, I presume, in all your ships, gentlemen?"

They all expressed assent.

"Well, then, gentlemen, here you see, we are in for it—'it' meaning the first great naval battle of modern times. I dare say that we shall conduct ourselves with credit, fighting as we do in the name of justice and our country. In half-an-hour, say, we shall be face to face with these people. I recommend that an extra ration of grog be served out to all blue-jackets, meantime, and that all final preparations be pushed forward. My flag-lieutenant will at once send up as my signal for a general engagement, the words: 'For England.' I think that is all I need say now, except to wish you a very hearty good-bye, and a fine fight, and the aid and blessing of Almighty God."

The officers, having saluted, some of them pressed the hand of the Rear-Admiral, and trooping hurriedly forth with mutual *adieux*, and half-satiric, half-sad *morituri salutamuses*, went away through the gloom, each to his own ship.

The snouts of the ponderous bulks of metal were ploughing and forging leisurely through the sea.

Yonder, brilliantly lit by flash-light on the starboard flagship, fluttered the battle-word of the coming combat: "For England."

But the night now had darkened. A wind freshened from the sou'-west, and drove sombre expeditions of slow cloud over the blurred face of the scurrying and struggling moon. She seemed affrighted at the pregnant silence of this gliding navy—a silence pregnant with a thousand thunders. But the sea was fairly calm, crisped only with short, low fringes of foam driven by the wind.

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The *Jupiter* was the second ship in the port file—that is to say, on the side nearest the coast as the fleet forged eastwards.

Her captain had been so pre-occupied with affairs during the bustle of the afternoon, that he had eaten nothing for hours. Almost immediately on reaching his own ship after leaving the Rear-Admiral's, he hurriedly descended to his own quarters, and sat down to swallow some cold mouthfuls.

Happening to lift his eyes as he ate, he saw, sitting on a couch in the apartment, and quietly watching him, his guest, John Hardy. He had forgotten John.

"Well, John," he said, across a gag of mutton, "so you have dared, after all. In spite of my orders, eh, sir? Well, I suppose I must make the best of you, as you are here. But you are a foolish lad, you know."

"It can't be of any consequence, sir," said John. "I wanted to see a fight. It is always experience."

"Yes, yes. But a young man like you. Have you no care for your life, sir?"

"It can't be of any consequence, sir."

"'A day less or more,
On sea, or on shore,
We die—does it matter when?'

"Is that the sort of sentiment, eh, John?"

"Something of that sort, sir."

"Well, you might do worse, perhaps. But what is the matter with you? The sweat is rolling down your face."

"They have been allowing me to help a little about the ship, sir."

"What, with your own hands, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, John Hardy—I shall never have another chance of telling you, so let me tell you now, boy—I must say that I regard you as a most worthy specimen of the Navy. Your school and cadet careers were not very brilliant, were they? Rather—ahem—well—we will say nothing of that. But in other respects—you know what I would say, perhaps—I give you my Certificate—that sort of thing. Certainly, you are as bold as a fly, modest, gentle, thoroughly English—a little—er—original, perhaps, eh, sir? Like your father, eh, sir? But with the makings of a great sailor in you, John Hardy. Pity you should be throwing yourself away like this."

John was blushing.

"You are very kind, sir," he just muttered.

"Do not mention it. The circumstances excuse one, you know, in being quite frank."

"Quite so, sir."

John, all the time, was burning to ask a question. Suddenly he said:

"Might I ask, sir, what are the proposed tactics for the battle?"

"Well, John, there's going to be plenty of fun, apparently, for you to see. The idea is to concentrate all our efforts upon the battleships and cruisers, so as to render it out of the question, if possible, for this particular fleet ever again to act as convoy to an invading force."

"And the liners and transports, sir?"

"They are to be left severely alone this time."

"To land their troops on British soil, sir?"

"Yes, boy—yes—*this* time."

Suddenly John Hardy leapt to his feet, his hands clenched, his face inflamed.

"Oh, *sir!*" he cried.

The Captain looked at him in surprise, saying:

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Captain MacLeod, England will never bear such an indignity!"

"Well, my boy, but War, you understand, is not fun and heroics—it is dead earnest. England will *have* to bear it, I'm afraid."

"*She shan't, by God!*" cried John Hardy, striking out his right fist, suddenly riven and smitten by the Call of Heaven within him.

Then immediately he fell back upon the couch, sobbing bitterly into his two hands.

The Captain stood over him, patting his shoulder, murmuring:

"Poor John! poor John!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Battle.

The fleets drew nearer, vaguely revealed to each other by means of electric search-lights.

That morning, as early as five o'clock, the French, Russian, and German national anthems had been played on board the fleet of the Allies at Brest, and the colours saluted. Immediately afterwards the ships steamed out of harbour. The land-troops were already massed on board the transports.

To prevent their movements being watched and reported, they had proceeded at a high rate of speed under forced draught, never very far from the French coast, till they reached the longitude of Fécamp; then, striking directly northward for Beachy Head, had slackened speed about five o'clock, forty miles from the coast; then, as the twilight gathered, they had deflected their course to about West by North, making leisurely for the neighbourhood of Shoreham. When they first became aware of the approach of the British fleet, they were moving almost directly westward, as the British vessels were moving directly eastward.

The formation of the enemy was in a quadruple line. In the front were fourteen battleships at twelve cables' interval; in the second, cruisers of the three classes; in the third, gun-boats, torpedo-boats, and composite gun-vessels; in the fourth the array of liners and troopships bearing the land forces.

The British Rear-Admiral had rightly surmised what would be the first action of the French Contre-Amiral; his primary thought was for the troopships. Out from the flagship went a trumpet-call, repeated far over the ocean in a long line of sonorous and brazen-lunged iteration. Down the files of ships it went braying, a voice that died and instantly rose in vibrant outcry again, commanding all troopers and liners to go pacing backwards twelve miles to westward, and there maintain a hollow square till further notice.

Through the wide region of black smoke which poured forth now over the Channel from the entire Allied fleet, in their effort to get up steam, flocked the captains of ships to a hurried conference with Contre-Amiral des Vismes de Monthier on the *Amiral Baudin*.

His recommendation was, that the Allied battleships should deploy in two double lines, converging inwards toward the British ships, just as the British ships (as could be already surmised) were diverging outward toward the Allies. He said: "We have fourteen battleships—they, I take it, eight." (In reality, the British battleships only numbered seven, for the *Majestic* was gone.) "I propose, then, that the four battleships of our present line now furthest to starboard will form the outer converging line of starboard attack, and the next four the inner converging line, parallel to the outer; thus, toward the coast, two starboard lines of eight Allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships—and the contest, I think, should be short.

"In the same way with our port battleships; the three furthest to port will form the outer converging line, the next three the inner—thus two port lines of six Allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships—eight to four, and six to four: the contest should not be long, messieurs. I even suggest, as a good point of tactics, that, in view of our enormous preponderance in weight, we should make our victory almost instantaneous by placing a very short interval indeed

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between combatant ships—say, half-a-mile at the most; for, of course, the shorter the conflict the less our damage—a point of immeasureable importance to us at present, considering the *rôle* we have to fill in acting as convoy to more invading land-forces in the near future. I need not point out, too, that an enemy's ship, hemmed in between two hostile ships, will be the more hampered as to her power of ramming, the closer the quarters. But we have little time for talk; cruisers, gunboats, and composite vessels will find their work cut out according to the dispositions of the enemy's less important flotilla. I can only hope that these recommendations meet with your approval, as I know they do with that of my colleague, Vice-Admiral von Grüdenau. Adieu, then, messieurs! This temporary interruption to our progress will, in less than a quarter of an hour, be overcome. *Vive la France! Vivent—vivent—les Alliés!*"

He was gone.

"*Vive la France—vivent les Alliés!*" repeated the Allied commanders all round the table, as they raised to their lips glasses of wine poured from the carafes; then, saluting, they hurried to their gigs.

And none too soon. They had hardly reached their ships, and turned them to the performance of the prescribed evolutions, when the fleet of England was upon them.

The Contre-Amiral of the Allied fleet had made a small error in guessing the formation which the British fleet of battleships would assume in making the attack. He had naturally assumed that, their number being so small, they would meet the Allied fleet in two divergent single lines of ships; but the British Rear-Admiral, hoping for some small, hypothetical advantage, had, as we have seen, decided to advance in two divergent echelons, or step-shape formations. The error was of little importance, for, as soon as the fleets approached sufficiently, the Allies would detect the formation of the British, and slightly modify their plan accordingly.

Unfortunately for them, however, the eyes of John Hardy, with their faculty of sight and insight, were abroad over the sea that night.

He had burst into sobs in the Captain's-quarters of the *Jupiter*. The Captain stood over him, patting his shoulder compassionately, wondering at the intensity of the lad's pride and patriotism.

But it was not pride, nor patriotism, which was then rending the frail frame of John Hardy with sobs—it was something far more.

To hear irresistibly within you the Heavenly Call to be up and save the world, and then, at once, to be overwhelmed with the bitter sense of the strong Commonplace, and with the feeling of sheer impotence in the face of it—this is the tragedy of genius.

John sobbed. There had risen in him a sublime strength, an immoderate arrogance, and with it the tingling consciousness that, were he that night the Admiral of the Fleet, he would and could somehow save England from the shame of an invading foot; then, all at once, he remembered that he was by no means the Admiral of the Fleet. So he sobbed.

But his sobs were lucky just at that moment, as many things which he did had a trick of being. They softened and touched the Captain, just at the right instant.

"Well, John, I must be going," he said.

John lifted up his hot face.

"Where shall I take my place, sir?" he asked.

"Your place? I should stay here if I were you."

"May I, sir, if it is not asking too much ——"

"What?"

"Come with you, sir."

"Where to?"

"The conning-tower, sir."

"My good fellow!"

"If it is not asking too much, sir. One must see the fight from somewhere, as one happens to be here."

"Well—but—the conning-tower!"

"I shall make myself small, sir. You won't talk to me, nor I, of course, to you. A guest chooses his lodging in a case of doubt, you know, sir."

He was smiling now, and when he smiled his face was wonderfully winning.

The Captain hesitated, and was lost. He said:

"Well, you are an original, John, that's all I can say—like your poor father before you, boy. Come along, then—come along!"

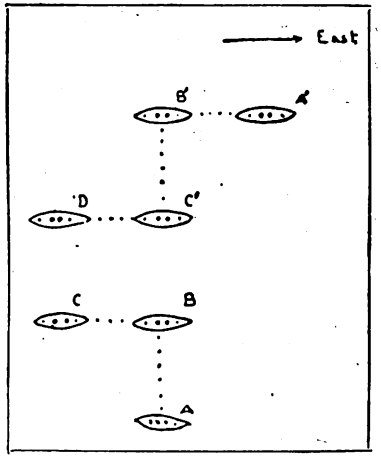
They ran briskly up.

Suddenly the still night was a-sound. The two fleets were about to mingle.

At that moment, so great was the disparity of weight, that the wildest hope of patriotism could not have predicted anything but swift destruction to the British fleet; nor was the object of the British captains victory, but only the disablement, as far as might be, of the enemy.

To explain the appalling ruin and havoc which one pair of seeing sailor-eyes brought upon the entire Allied squadron, we must employ diagrams.

The following is the formation in which the seven British battleships approached the enemy, with an interval of about a knot, or nautical mile, between each pair of ships, A being the Rear-Admiral's ship, the *Magnificent*, A′ the *Prince George* leading the starboard echelon, and B′ the *Jupiter*, bearing John Hardy.



The following is the formation in which, by the direction of the Contre-Amiral, the allied fleet of battle-ships advanced, about the same interval being preserved among

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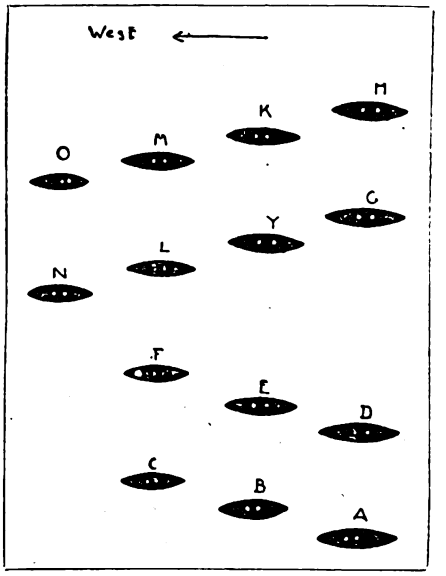
ship-pairs as among the British ship-pairs, counting a kilomètre as approximately equal to three-thirds of a mile.



The fleets had no sooner commenced to intermingle, than Hardy, standing now with Captain MacLeod in the conning-tower of the *Jupiter*, was in full possession of their method of advance; and he was no sooner in full possession of it, than he started, his eyes widened, and words burst from him.

"Sir, sir," he cried, "the enemy are advancing in two double files. It seems clear to me that they suppose us to be advancing in two single files."

"Yes, that is so," said the Captain unconcernedly, proceeding to give the order in which John had interrupted him.

"But, sir, sir," persisted John.

"Well, John, well," said the Captain, a little irritably at the second interruption.

"It seems to me, sir—really—that if the *Jupiter* and the *Victorious* both put out all external lights and lie low, the enemy will *continue* to think that we are in single file instead of in echelon, and then——"

Up leapt the Captain's arms.

"By gad, you are right, boy!" he cried, staring hard at John, his head struck into a sudden sideward suspension of silent meditation.

Then, in a flash, he saw it all—the whole inwardness of the boy's suggestion—the long vista of results—the whole huge drama of the enemy's disaster.

"Sir—Captain MacLeod——" said John, all eagerness.

"But to warn the *Victorious* in time?" mused the Captain.

"Send *me*, sir! Water from the engines—the picket-boat! The *Victorious* is only two miles off; I shall be there in three or four minutes."

"Well—I say yes. You understand, of course, that you will never come back."

"Thank you, Captain—good-bye—they are done for, Captain, by the Lord——!"

He was gone, rushing.

On board Her Majesty's ships of war things are done with a certain celerity; everything is oiled and easy, and goes off with the gliding smoothness of lightning. The *Jupiter* was carrying at her mast-head the bright white steam-light, on her starboard bow the usual green, and on her port bow the usual red, light; by the time these were out, and the whole ship plunged into darkness, the little picket-boat, under forced draught, was driving her head through two combs of foam, herself in darkness, with John Hardy and two bluejackets, in a direction nearly south.

She passed before the ram of the *Repulse* (C'), and in less than two minutes afterwards, Hardy was at the conning-tower of the *Victorious* (B).

Suddenly the *Victorious*, too, vanished into darkness.

The night was now very gloomy.

There remained a third ship, the *Mars* (D), whose presence it was desirable to conceal for the time being; the concealment was not so necessary, as she was more remote from the advancing fleet of the enemy, and by the time the significance of her presence in her then position was understood, the mischief intended might be done.

But John Hardy would leave nothing to chance. It was quite out of the question now, that if he attempted to reach the *Mars*, the little picket could live in the shattered sea-surface, into which, surely, in a minute's time all that area of water would be torn by shot and shell. Yet he dared. The little boat, in a very passion of haste, throbbing as though she would throb her little heart out, went panting north-westward toward the *Mars*.

Was he too late? There was a sudden shock and roar from the east, and in the night a dull glare, red and wrathful. He sat with the tiller-ropes in one hand, the other holding a double-glass to his eyes. A gust of wind had blown away his light straw hat, and the breeze was a-play in his hair.

A British first-class gunboat rushed sounding past him, hasting wrathfully to battle, washed in spray from stem to stern. Close by his starboard bow she dashed like an angry darting fish, leaving the little picket nodding and dipping in a choppy sea which almost swamped her in her hurried embassy. The next moment a shrapnel-shell burst into light a hundred yards before him. The fight had commenced—Bellona was abroad.

Was he too late? He knew now that to reach the *Mars* he must perish. Certainly, he could never return to the *Jupiter*. But he held on his way. He was in his element. Now he knew for what he was born; it was for this—the mixed and multitudinous roar of cannon sounding over the sea—England's sea—*his* sea! Something in his heart, in his life's blood, and in his very soul's soul, answered to it, was akin to it. He had never been really happy till this night. He held on his rash and desperate way.

His eyes were alight with battle.

Suddenly he said under his breath: "Bravo!"

The lights of the *Mars* had gone out into darkness.

Her captain—Captain Henderson—had noted, first, the extinguishing of the lights of the *Jupiter*, and had been puzzled; then the going out into darkness of the *Victorious*. He had stood with knit brows for nearly two minutes, and then had understood. A few seconds later the *Mars*, too, was invisible.

At once John Hardy put his helm to starboard, running about north-east, to regain the *Jupiter*. He was now hurrying into the very region of the starboard limb of the enemy's fleet, and by the time he neared the *Repulse*, that ship was already engaged with two of the enemy. In another half-minute the sea around these three was a white tempest of thrashed and spurting spray, as when thronging hail flogs furiously upon a lake, and the sky about them was a vague domed cavern of coppery flame. Never did sailor, in so small a craft, run the gauntlet of a more ticklish peril, passing through a sea crowded with torpedoes, and cracking shells, and balls of fire. But the picket boat never once so much as swerved; straight onward she throbbed, through the region of lurid half-light, carrying at her stern-post the Union Jack; then once more into darkness. In another minute John Hardy sprung up the side of the dark *Jupiter*, and ran to the conning-tower.

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"You have done it, then, John?" said Captain MacLeod; "I congratulate you from my soul."

"Thank you, sir. Now, perhaps, I think we may see these fellows banged a little——"

Blood covered his face, and the breeze in his hair gave him the look of wildness and dismay.

"We may, John, we may—thanks to you, boy. Wait, wait—let us see."

It did not take long to see.

In a very few minutes the condition of the battle was this: Two French ships, one on each side of her, were battering the *Magnificent* into shambles; two more, one on each side of her, were making a wreck of the *Prince George;* two more were tackling the *Repulse;* the *Jupiter* was not fighting, the *Victorious* was not fighting, the *Mars* was not fighting—the Allies being unconscious at the moment of their presence in their then unsuspected positions; one German ship was in collision with a French on the starboard side of the *Resolution* (C); one French ship was ramming another French ship between the *Resolution* and the *Mars;* another French ship was blowing a German ship out of the water at a point a long way to the west of the British fleet; and two German ships were cruising about in the same longitude,

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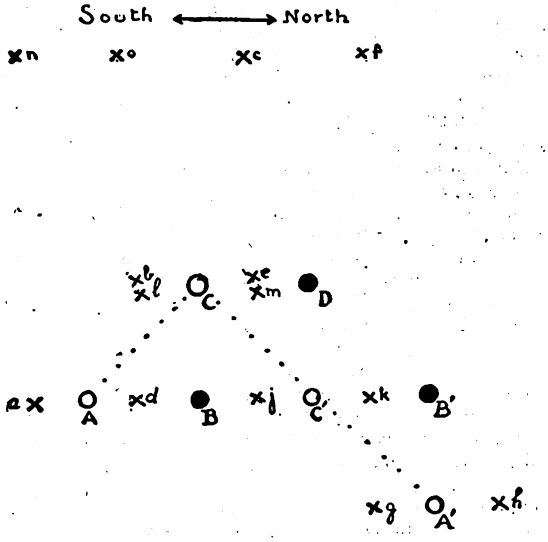
searching in vain for two enemies which should have been there, and were not.

Thus, of the fourteen Allied battleships, six only were engaged in actual conflict with three British vessels, while a fourth British vessel was pouring a tempest of barbette quick-firing, and machine gun-shot into the two ships in collision on her starboard side, and watching the sinking of a French ship rammed by a French on her port side. How this complexity of tragedy overwhelmed the enemy will be readily seen by the following plan of the battle, published in every London newspaper the next morning. Crosses and small letters stand for Allied ships, circles and capitals stand for British, the three British ships which put out their lights being printed in black:



It will be seen from the plan that, the lights of the three ships being extinguished, the starboard limb of the Allied squadron saw a straight line of British ships—namely, **C, C', A'**—consisting of the *Resolution*, the *Repulse*, and the *Prince George*. This made them certain of their conjecture that the British were advancing in two single lines, and they accordingly proceeded to port and starboard of these three, in order to attack on both broadsides; but expecting not three, but four, British vessels in each limb, the Allied ships *n* and *o* went on south-westward to seek them.

Meanwhile, on their port side also, the Allied ships saw a straight line of British ships, namely, A, C, consisting of the *Magnificent* and—once again—the *Resolution*. Believing that this limb consisted also of four distinct ships, two of which were further on, and not appreciating the fact that the same *Resolution* (C) was about to be attacked by two of their starboard fleet, they steamed forward. Two of their ships, *c* and *f*, reached the stations indicated on the plan, surprised to find no enemy; while two others, *b* and *e*, came into contact with two of their own ships of the starboard limb, *l* and *m*. Before she could discover her error, or stop her speed, *m* had hopelessly rammed *e*, and the *Resolution* was pouring in a murderous hail on both *b* and *l*, which had similarly collided, *b* at this time being an inert mass floating helplessly with rudder and screws shattered by *l*; while, yonder to the West, *c* and *o*, both searching for the missing enemy, made a sudden discovery, and began to batter each other with barbette and shrapnel, before even guessing at the hopeless error, and the blind delusion, and the harum-scarum of disaster, in which they had been involved by the simple expedient of a sailor lad.

At this moment—simultaneously—the three darkened ships opened fire; and peaceful merchantmen, heading with slow industry on their diverse ways, heard far and wide over the Channel, the shock and rumour of that complex clamour.

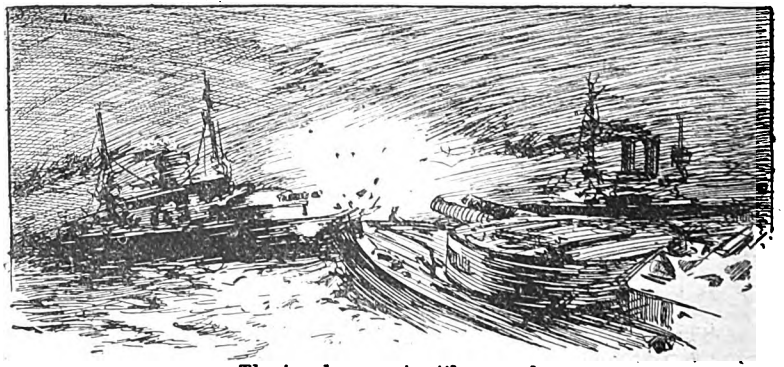
It was a fearful battle. Nearly all the Allied ships which were in actual combat with British ships, and which had taken up their positions in the hope of pouring in a double broadside on a British ship, one from each side, now suddenly found themselves in the same predicament which they had planned for the British; for, without warning, a dark, unsuspected ship opened fire upon them, placing between two fires those who had planned two fires for others.

A glance at the diagram will show how this came about. Thus, the ship *k* was between the fires of the *Jupiter* and the *Repulse*, the ship *y* between the fires of the *Repulse* and the *Victorious*, and the ship *d* between the fires of the *Victorious* and the *Magnificent*.

As yet, no colours had been struck, but the *Deutschland* (*b*), whose rudder had been shattered by the *Sadowa* (*l*), was a barely-floating ruin sinking fast, with only one water-tight compartment uninvaded by the inswirling waters; the *Prince George* (A) was just plunging—with screws high in air, and a shriek from her burst and hissing engines that reached to heaven—to her last resting place; the *Majestueuse* (*e*), with a strange fatal suddenness, had sunk on being rammed by the *Formidable* (*m*) and almost immediately afterwards, the *Formidable* herself cracked in twain amid-ships, struck by a torpedo intended for the *Majestueuse* which had been lanced by a second-class torpedo boat, lowered in the dark by the *Mars*; while the *Mars* herself, having not yet relighted her lamps, was rammed at her central armours-belt by a second-class British cruiser, the *Charybdis*, the smaller ship shearing away with broken bows to go down by the head three miles away amid a crowd of allied cruisers.

Yonder to westward of the thickest region of battle, the *Amiral Baudin* (*c*), with a single twelve-inch shell, had annihilated both funnels of the *Kaiserhof*, while the *Kaiserhof*, before she could detect the *ruse* by which she was made to destroy her own flagship, had rattled the ribs of the *Amiral Baudin* with a rain of thousands of rounds of machine and quick-firing six and three-pounder shot, and had sent a barbette shell shrieking through her fore-armoured tube into the bowels of the French ship, where it ripped up her armoured deck, and in a nightmare of hellish fury, rent the whole central interior of the vessel into *débris*.

It was very shortly after this that even the ear-splitting din of that wide and various warfare received, as it were,



The two bows met with a crash.

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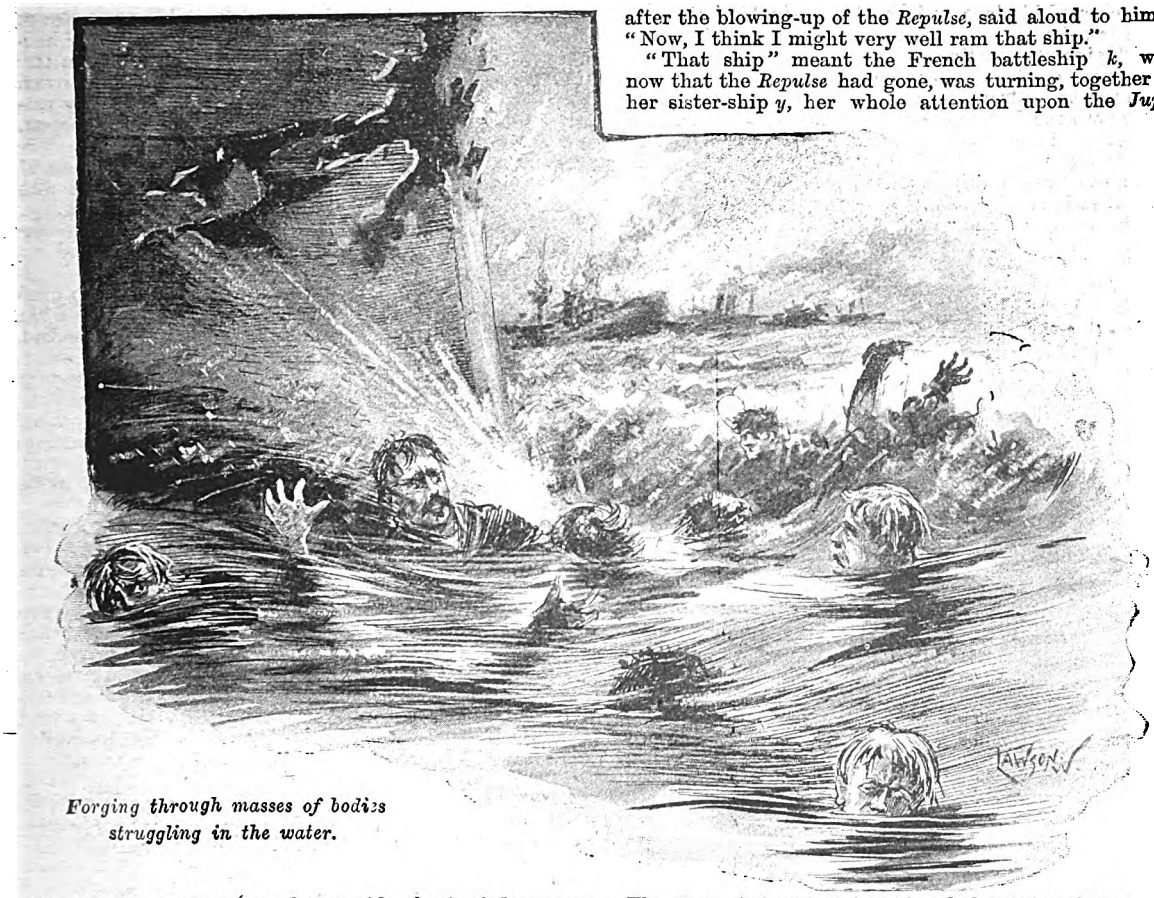

Forging through masses of bodies struggling in the water.

an added shock of horror, when a wide sheet of flame was seen to rise and ride in quivering glare toward the sky, and the next moment a bang of thunder where the *Repulse* had been shook the universal sea. A fire had run through her entire length between decks, and ignited at nearly the same moment every atom of explosive within her into one splendid detonation. She did not burst—she crumbled to fragments. At the same time, at the other end of that line of ships, the *Magnificent* was quietly going down by her poop, where a French submarine boat had affixed a Whitehead.

In a very few minutes after the actual commencement of hostilities, four of the seven British battleships had disappeared, and nine of the Allied fourteen.

Of the intricate and incalculable warfare that was darting about in furious wrath in every direction in the shape of the less massive armatures, little was sufficiently salient to be recorded.

The enemy was very preponderant in number, but deficient in weight of first-class cruisers. The mutual havoc went on rapidly with complex disaster and success. Ships about to disappear rose again, blown high by torpedoes; men on the point of going down in the wheeling suction of some great sinking vessel were arrested in their descent to be mangled by distracted shrapnel, or scalded by some flight of stinging steam; crafts were destroyed, and destroyed again, and ten times destroyed again, before they sank in scattered shreds. It was an anarchy and blindness of rage, which rent the already rent, and mutilated the already murdered.

The *Jupiter*, by some favour of her position, was still partially seaworthy, when Captain MacLeod, about a minute after the blowing-up of the *Repulse*, said aloud to himself, "Now, I think I might very well ram that ship."

"That ship" meant the French battleship *k*, which, now that the *Repulse* had gone, was turning, together with her sister-ship *y*, her whole attention upon the *Jupiter*. The *Jupiter's* fore-deck had already been ripped up, and one of her fore-barbette guns unshipped.

At once she went wheeling in a sixteen-point curve to starboard, pouring at the same time a broadside upon the enemy. But it was at once seen that the most delicate seamanship would now be required, for not only was the *Jupiter's* move detected, but the French ship *k* began to manœuvre to anticipate the attack by herself delivering the ram, and the chase was promptly joined by *j*, which had just succeeded in lodging a finishing shell in the *Victorious* (B).

All the three vessels, though one of them was sinking slowly, and all were more or less ruined, were intact in engines and funnels, and went careering in swift flight on evolutionary curves whose outcome only the nicest commanding skill could determine. To destroy a funnel of one or both—this was Captain MacLeod's hope. He started a rattle of quick-firing shot as the three vessels wheeled nearer. But there was a racket on board the *Jupiter*—a bursting shell—a clatter of broken plate—a stream of blood poured down John Hardy's face—Captain MacLeod fell limp and senseless at his feet.

At that moment from the conning-towers of *both* the French ships, there went forth the command: "Prepare to ram." The *Jupiter* was between them; and her captain was laid low.

But a born sailor was now in command of the *Jupiter*.

John Hardy coolly gave the order to slacken speed. With his eyes on both the hurrying, impending ships, he waited thirty, thirty-five seconds; and at the right fraction of a second, he gave the order: "Full steam ahead—quick!"

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Blood covered his face, and the breeze in his hair gave him rather a look of wildness and disarray; but his pulses beat with absolute steadiness.

As the poop of the *Jupiter* slipped elusively away from between the two advancing rams, there arose a fearful outcry from both the French ships. But it was too late. No celerity of hand, no power on earth, could now avert the awful catastrophe. The two bows met, and crashed.

One of the French ships leant to port, as if fainting in despair, then languidly sank.

Was he really in command? Captain MacLeod lay at his feet. Who knew? Would not his, John Hardy's, commands be obeyed tacitly, if he tacitly assumed the command? And *he*, at least, was under no orders from the Rear-Admiral. He ordered the helm to be put three points to starboard, and full speed ahead. The *Jupiter* went hasting at once directly northward.

John was running from the fight.

The first clear necessity seemed to him now to get out of the battle, while the *Jupiter's* engines were still intact.

He suspected, indeed, that she was already slowly sinking. But there was still hope. She went ploughing northward. Her position on the outskirts of the battle favoured him.

Of what particular crime was it that he was guilty? He knew well that it was a crime. Was it treason, or piracy, or mutiny, or felony? The place which he now occupied should have been filled by the Commander of the *Jupiter*, now that her Captain was senseless. John Hardy knew that; but then he remembered that her commander was under flag-orders. *He* was not.

Three miles to the north of her former position he turned the ship's bow from north to north-east; three more miles, and he turned it from north-east to east. Now he breathed freely; the *Jupiter* was well beyond effective range of the battling ships yonder.

Her lights had long since been again put out. On she went through the darkness, east by south now, battered and broken in her upper works, but tolerably sound below—and with funnels still whole! and with a ram ploughing through the water at twenty miles an hour! and absolutely safe now from shot!

John Hardy stood in her conning-tower with the wind in his light hair, and the blood on his face, and a slight frown on his brow. And on through the darkness drove the silent battleship.

In little more than half-an-hour she was upon that hollow square of troopers and liners, which were here just gently forging through the water till the conclusion of the fight. There were thirty-eight of them, and they contained over 120,000 men.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, the *Jupiter* pounced upon them.

Has the reader ever seen a thoroughbred, long-snouted rat-terrier, the prize-winner perhaps at a dog-show, let loose in a small room among a hundred hoarded rats? With a gleeful, sudden spring he is among them as they scamper into a huddled heap in one corner, seeking to hide from the very sight of their little, leering eyes that countenance of wrath. He, for his part, gives one, and only one, swift crack at the bones of the neck, and then disdainfully drops the limp vermin, to go on to the next.

It was something in this way that the *Jupiter* dealt with these thirty-eight troopships and liners. One after another they cracked like tea-pots, they snapped like rotten twigs, they sank at a touch. Hardy rammed one on one side of the square, and went straight on and rammed another opposite; but in the rapid passage from opposite to opposite, he had sunk five with barbette and broadsides of quick-firing guns. The *Jupiter* rushed about among them like a fury, dashing through a multitude of complex evolutionary curves, and heaping havoc all around. It was a scene of unparalleled carnage. In a short time the ram of the *Jupiter* was forging through masses of bodies struggling in the water; what was left of the four sides of the square was shooting forth flames; and the *Jupiter* herself was being now swept by tempests of bullets from the land forces still afloat. Without visible result, however. Three only of the transports, which were sufficiently uninjured by the time they could get under speed, escaped. The rest went down.

It was now a question with John Hardy whether he could save the *Jupiter* from sinking by beaching her. She was already low by the stern, and the coast was miles away. The moment his awful work was ended, he gave the order to turn her bow directly northward.

He only just failed.

A quarter of a mile out from Brighton, he bent over Captain MacLeod, looked close into his eyes, and put his hand over his heart. The heart beat, but a splinter had gashed all the chest.

"Sir, sir," said John, "can you not——"

He shook the Captain. A moan came from the prostrate man; his eyes opened.

"Try to understand," said John; "you will have to *swim*, or be lost. Can you understand?"

The Captain stared stupidly, but nodded, and John stripped him hurriedly, then himself.

The next moment he gave the order:

"Hands to leap overboard and make for shore!"

There was nothing resembling a boat any longer left on board the *Jupiter*.

In two minutes three hundred bluejackets were in the water, and the *Jupiter*, left alone, took in a cascade of sea over her poop.

A bluejacket on one side of Captain MacLeod, and John on the other, were making slow progress forward. Toward ten o'clock they felt bottom beneath their feet; they dragged themselves forward, and fell fainting on Brighton beach.

(*To be continued.*)

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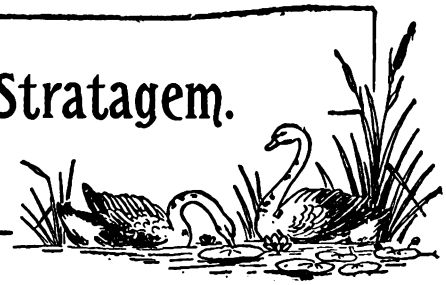
Love's Stratagem.



"I'M afraid," she said reflectively, "it can't be done."

"But why?" I urged. "There are a hundred reasons why it should be done, and not a single one for the negative side."

She looked at me gravely from under the fringe of her long dark lashes, but made no further reply; then began rocking herself slowly to and fro in the hammock. Now I, who had known her all her sweet, short life, knew that was a certain sign of mental disturbance, for usually she was as calmly, placidly reposeful and self-possessed as it is possible for an up-to-date 19th century girl to be; and I determined to push my advantage.

"Now see here, Mollie," I said, "it is not the fact that he is my friend that makes me beset you in this way" (it was not, indeed, but I saw no reason just then to state my inner motive), "but look at the matter reasonably, from this point of view. Where could one find a better fellow than dear old Tom? Clever, jolly, good-looking, rich and absolutely devoted to you. Knowing all this, can you look me in the face and say you are not ashamed of the way you are treating him?"

She did not look me in the face; she did worse—she laughed.

I went on severely: "Mollie, I am surprised that a girl of your sense and capabilities should descend to the level you have" (Mollie, I am glad to say, here cast upon me one startled look; at last I had succeeded in rousing her) "to the level of an unprincipled coquette."

The little rogue, instead of being impressed by my eloquence, looked immensely relieved as I concluded; still she vouchsafed no reply.

"Now, won't you promise me to think seriously of it, my dear girl?" I said persuasively.

She sat bolt upright now and looked me squarely in the eye, and as I looked I quailed, for there I saw no sign of yielding, only firm determination, and I shuddered as I thought how much I had at stake.

"Jim," she said, "you entirely overlook my avowed principles," with an air as if there could be nothing further in the matter to discuss. I, however, thought differently.

"And do you so dignify your absurd fancies?" I inquired, adopting as a last hope my most sarcastic tone of superiority.

"My absurd fancies!" she echoed, the light of battle flaming up in her lovely eyes and a scorn of all mankind curving her Cupid's bow of a mouth. Even as I trembled before her gaze I thought to myself that I had never seen her look prettier.

"And that is what you men call the striving of woman after something higher, nobler, better than what has been; that is how you look upon us when you no longer find us pliant to your tyrannical will—when we feel we must use the gifts God gave us for the good of the world, and not settle down into a fireside nonentity; And yet you ask me to marry one of these very men. Never, I tell you, never!"

She had got in all the points beautifully, but I groaned mentally, and inwardly reviled myself for my stupid blunder; but the little witch was provoking. By fair means or foul I must mollify her. I must win her to do as I wished. So I answered penitently:

"Forgive me, Mollie, my words were ill-chosen, and far be it from me to speak slightingly of a noble effort to uplift humanity on the part of anyone." (Humanity be hanged! My thought was only of a small, but very precious part of it). "Yet let me ask you if it is beneath the dignity of a beautiful girl like yourself"—Mollie's dimples showed for one fleeting second, but the embryo smile was sternly suppressed—"to cheer, uplift, and help a man who needs you infinitely more than struggling humanity as a whole, and is pitifully at a loss without you."

"That does sound sensible," she admitted reflectively. "Why didn't you talk to me like that before?"

"It is what I meant all the time," I answered. It was a lucky inspiration, yet, Heaven help me, I could not scruple at trifles at this critical point. "Surely you did not think I wanted you to give up your" (high-flown notions had almost escaped me, but I managed to change it in time to) "life mission; only to select for it some worthy object."

"In the shape of Tom?" she inquired, laughing. "Well," here she leaned towards me confidentially, "I don't mind telling you, Jim, for you've known me always, that I am rather fond of Tom, and I would be half inclined to give him what he wants if it were not for Kate. You know all about our plans together—how five of our class pledged ourselves, after we had graduated, to be true to our higher selves, to let nothing interfere with the faithful performance of our mission, and matrimony especially was not to be thought of till some real work was *un fait accompli*. Two of our little circle have basely gone over to the enemy, and poor Louise is dead, so that Kate and I are the only ones left. I'm terribly afraid I am not quite so much in earnest as I have been, but Kate is. Why, only yesterday she was speaking so seriously of all we must do and be to uphold our ideas. I simply do not dare to give up."

My heart was beating with a most joyous hope long before she had finished, but I traitorously hid it under a solemn countenance, and only said:

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"But, Mollie, can you not explain to Kate's perfect satisfaction that your mission is making Tom so thoroughly happy and contented in his own home, and in so inspiring him by your sweet presence that he will put that bright mind of his to better work than devising means of winning you, as he has hitherto done, and so, in this way, do your work for humanity by proxy?"

"How well you put it, Jim, and how logical it sounds: And—yes, I'll just do it."

As she announced to me this altogether desirable news she settled herself once more comfortably in her hammock, only to jump up hastily the next moment and demand curiously:

"But why under the sun do you take such an immense amount of interest in the matter?"

I had been expecting this question, and was somewhat prepared, so I answered slowly:

"I suppose I'd better make a clean breast of it. You see, Kate felt much the same as you did, and I simply had to get you to give in before I see her to-night, for, as things have turned out now—well, we are to be married in June."

Reginald Horsley.

THE STORM—AND AFTER.

A PRAIRIE IDYL.

The prairies were growing dark. The moon had not risen, and the twilight had withdrawn till in the far west it stretched along the horizon a mere saffron glow. Off to the north lay a dense blackness. Few stars were visible. The night was sultry. It would rain before morning.

So thought Rack Todd, as he rose from his milking stool, and felt the darkness press down upon him. His thoughts had absorbed him, and he had not done the work well. The cows were all going dry. He knew from its weight that the pail in his hand was not half full.

"Even the dumb beasts go back on me!" he muttered, and thought bitterly of his blighted crops, his garden rank with weeds, his home bereft.

Had he been told that all this was due to a lack of the vigorous labour and sound judgment which in former years had made his fields and herds yield swiftly and abundantly, he would have answered truly that he had worked harder than now—toiling in the field from early morning till long after the sun had sunk. Alas, the corn had fallen with the weeds that day, while he had been staring straight ahead, trying to think of nothing, but only succeeding in going over and over his plots for bitter retribution.

The cows were but showing the effect of unskilful milkings. Rosie moved away as though she resented it. With a sudden spasm of rage, he flung the milk over her.

"Durn ye!" he roared, "a half loaf *ain't* better'n no bread! If I can't have all, I won't have none!"

"Daddy, daddy, I wants my milk!"

"All right!" groaned Rack. "Shet up! I'm gettin' your milk."

But she was not to be appeased. He had startled her from her nestling dreams by a fence-post, and covered with the soft moisture of slumber, the night struck her chill. She commenced crying in a whining, exasperating fashion, and he saw the faint glow of her light dress approaching. She held up her little tin cup saying over and over again: "I wants my milk! Daddy, I wants my milk!" ending in a wail.

Rack picked her up and shook her.

"Shet up, I tell ye! I'm a-gettin' your milk. Stop that hollerin', now nobody's hurtin' ye. There, there! Daddy never meant to! Ye ain't skeered of Daddy, air ye? Be a good girl, now, an' he'll get your milk right off."

"I wants my milk!" she wailed.

Rack put her down despairingly, and went to another cow. There were times when that sweet, whining baby voice threatened his reason.

The child pattered along till she found a steer drowsing comfortably over his cud. She hit him sharply on the back with her little tin cud. "Det up!" she commanded, and when he arose, she cuddled down in the warm place. She was a wise young woman, so far as her opportunites went, and not unlike her mother. She did not sleep again, but lay close, crooning something that was half wail, half song.

Rack found her there, and filled her cup again and again. She was very hungry. When she had finished, he put her over the fence and faced her towards the house.

"Get on Daddy's bed, and he'll undress ye when he comes in. Don't ye go and be skeered. There ain't nothin' to touch ye."

It was quite dark now; he could barely follow the gleam of her dress, but her sleepy, crooning voice came back to him.

"Heavens! whatever am I goin' to do!" he groaned, as he went back to his milking. A puff of air passed him. It would rain before midnight.

Soon the moon rose and battled with the angry clouds which slowly rolled about her. Since that one premonitory puff of air they had come on apace, sending no second warning. Now they covered all the heavens, save in that low corner in the East where the moon still held her own. Of the force which drove them, naught was heard or felt. Only where the East revealed it could the slow boiling and churning of their advance be seen. All else was tense with stillness. The storm might yet be an hour—half-hour distant.

Rack roused himself. He did not know how long he had sat there, his head bent forward, his hands idle.

"Thar's more wind than rain in them clouds—jest

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to spite me!" he said bitterly, thinking of his thirsty crops.

He had been late that spring with the planting, and his corn was in poor condition to stand the summer drought. Yet though he complained, it was to him of little moment whether the corn lived or died. His interest in it was purely fictitious, assumed because of the opportunity it gave him to voice his grudge against fate.

Yet in the past he had been a careful husbandman. To plant and reap, and play his small domestic part, had been the sum of his desires. To this end he had slaved and hoarded till the farm was his own. To this end his rustic wooing had prospered, and he had married "the prettiest girl on the Kaw."

His satisfaction had been complete. He had not dreamed that the vanities and frailties of his kind could touch him. He hardly knew that such things were, till he suddenly found himself chief actor in a tragedy, a *rôle* for which he was but poorly fitted. His impulse had been that of a savage—to strike out, to tear, to crush. But each effort, returning upon himself, numbed him with the knowledge of his own impotency, and he fell to reviling the weather, the crops, the door against which he stumbled, in fact, everything. For the woman who had forsaken him he had only a large contempt that forbade her all part in his scheme for vengeance.

"Such a useless, triflin' critter," as she had proved herself to be! He did not want to see or hear of her again. But for him.

"O Lord, give me my chance! give me my chance!" he cried.

His prayer brought him to his feet. With a cry he started backward, for *she* stood so close beside him that he had almost touched her.

The moonlight rested on her, and showed her tall and slim, yet lowly, as she bent before him.

"Get out o' this yard! Get off o' my place!" he panted.

"O, Rack, I ain't got nowhere to go!"

Her voice held the same sweet, irresponsible, complaining note as did the voice of the child. For the moment it strangled him, and his hand clutched his throat.

"Don't ye try to come that game on me! Don't ye!" he threatened. "Why don't ye go back?"

Then he saw that she was sobbing. A snarl of laughter tore his lips.

"He ain't got tired of ye *already*, has he? I'm a dummy, a greenhorn, a hayseed! He was more your kind. Told ye to go home to the ole man, an' your leetle girl, an' if she wa'n't dead yet fur want of a mother's care, to do your duty by her! Set her a good example. Whar's all the fine things he promised you?"

The moonbeams fell pitilessly upon her, revealing all her want and woe.

"You're a pretty picture! Get out o' my sight afore I kill ye."

Yet when he realised that she was going, he sprang after her: "Whar is he?"

"He's dead."

Her sobbing commenced afresh.

"I ain't eat nothin' to-day, an' I've come afar!" she wailed.

It was as if the woman had struck him, and he could not strike back. Ah, it was hard to be thus early cut off from every hope of the vengeance for which he had spent sleepless nights and fevered days, for which he had neglected his crops, for which the cows had gone dry! He did not want the interference of Death. How many times he had said that "killin' was too good for him!"

And now he was beyond the reach even of that!

"I'm hungry and I've come far!"

"Ye can't get nothin' hyar! Ye can't knock my plans on the head in that way. I'm a greenhorn, but I ain't quite so green as that!"

She leant against the fence and cried softly. She looked frail and weak. Rack stalked away. Then he whirled round.

"Thar's cold potatoes an' milk in the safe. Ye can help yeself."

When he reached the house, she was close behind him. The moon gave way then, and the clouds close over.

Rack paid no more attention to her. She hesitated a moment on the threshold while he struck a light, but seeing that he did not—would not—notice her that she had received all the invitation she was likely to get, she went timidly to the safe and opened it. Then she forgot everything, and ate ravenously.

Rack watched her furtively. She had been a dainty eater. Somehow this rapid, indiscriminate eating went farther than penitence towards atoning for her sin.

And in the yellow lamplight how pitiful a figure! Her dress was torn to tatters; her shoes were worn through; her hair was all dishevelled, an ugly scar, already healed, branded her forehead; there were hollows in her face where once there had been curves. Soiled lines streaked her cheeks, for she had wept many times that day. And in spite of all, she was a pretty woman. Almost was her beauty sufficient excuse for her being.

She noticed after a time that Rack was undressing the baby. How awkward, how helpless he was. The child was asleep, and lay, pink and moist, a dead weight on his lap. Its head and arms slipped and fell limply, yet how tender his touch. With a fawning motion, the wife crept to him.

"Let me do it," she said.

"If ye've et all ye want, ye'd better be movin'. There's going to be a storm."

"O, Rack, let me touch her. I jest wan' to tech her an' I'll go willin'."

"Naw. I don't want no foolishness. It's time fer ye to go. Ye can't stay hyar."

She went meekly. That was one of her virtues—meekness.

The storm was fast approaching. Gusts of wind shook the house, and were followed by ominous silence. Through the open door Rack saw the clouds lurid with dun and amber, whirling forward. The air was full of an electric glow, though there had been no flash.

Against that ghastly splendour, her physical form towered as black and tragic as her spiritual one. The clouds surged downward to embrace, engulf her. Another step, and she would be as one with them.

He forgot aught but the perilous moment. "Come back! Come!" he shouted, springing after her. With one hand he pulled her in, and with the other closed the door, against which, in another moment, the storm hurled itself.

The wind lulled towards morning. Rack, huddled against the window, listened to the regular breathing of the child and its mother. From without came the crackling of the young, growing corn, and he knew there would be harvest, and planting, and harvest again, for the rain fell steadily, plenteously.

B. Bridgman.

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THE TOWER-KEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

The evening shadows were gathering in the narrow streets of a small town near Schaffhausen, when a young man, dressed as a peasant, and bearing the traces of travel and exposure upon him, limped wearily into one of the taverns in a side street. His right arm was in a roughly improvised sling, and his whole appearance was that of a man who was suffering both in mind and body.

He ordered some food and shrank back into the darkest corner of the smoky parlour, without taking any notice of the two or three other men who were drinking and smoking round the hearth.

The inn-keeper's daughter, a bright, healthy girl of eighteen, soon brought the simple meal he had asked for, and setting a candle on the table before him, stood prepared to see him enjoy it.

"Take that away," he said, pointing to the light. "It hurts my eyes, I've been ill."

Instead of obeying this peremptory command she lifted the candle so as to be better able to see the face of her guest, and, after a careful examination, she said saucily:

"Your face doesn't match your clothes. Unless I'm very much mistaken, you're no peasant."

Her delicate flattery was quite lost upon him, and without more ado he jumped up and blew out the offending light. The girl turned away laughing merrily, and the surly stranger continued his supper.

A few moments later he noticed that the men at the other end of the room were taking an evident interest in him and that one of them was talking to the girl in a low tone, accompanied by looks and gestures that certainly pointed to his being the subject of the conversation. Then he caught the words:

"Rather suspicious, eh? Perhaps he's one of the insurgents, and if so we might make a nice little sum by handing him over to the authorities."

With these words the speaker rose and took a step towards the young man, who instantly sprang to his feet and made a dash for the door. Before the others had recovered from their surprise he had disappeared in the darkness, and only the sound of his retreating footsteps gave them any clue as to the way he had gone.

A hue-and-cry was raised, and in an incredibly short time a crowd of men, women, and children were chasing wildly through the usually quiet streets, some carrying torches, others brandishing the first weapon they could lay their hands on, and all shouting at the tops of their voices.

Meanwhile, the victim was hurrying down a narrow alley under cover of a high wall, and his strength was fast failing him.

He paused an instant to gain breath, and as he did so, a dark form came towards him, and a hand was laid on his arm.

"Are you an insurgent? Are they after you?" asked a woman's voice quickly.

"Let me go!" he muttered, and twisted himself from her grasp. But she was not to be daunted, and seizing him firmly again, she whispered:

"Come with me, I can save you."

He felt himself drawn on a few paces, and through a low door in the wall into a quiet grass-grown inclosure. They were only just in time, for as the heavy little door closed behind him, locking itself as it did so, he heard the trampling of feet, and the discord of many voices as his pursuers turned into the lane he had just left. One or two of them tried the door, behind which crouched the young man and his unknown deliverer, but it resisted their efforts, and they passed on. One man said as he did so:

"The gate is fast, and the wall's too high to climb, so he can't have got in there; but I could have sworn he came this way."

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When the sound of voices had died away the girl rose to her feet, and, taking her companion by the hand, said:

"I dare not light my lantern, but I can lead you to a safe place for the present. Come; we have no time to lose."

He went with her, feeling dazed and bewildered, with hardly strength to realise the sudden change in his position. They crossed the grass, and reached another door which stood at the base of a tall, massive building, which loomed far above them in the semi-darkness. Then they mounted a winding stone staircase, the girl going before, and the man painfully making the ascent some little distance behind her. At last they reached the top, and he saw the light shine out from an open door, and the figure of an old man stand out against it.

"Well, Linda, I was wondering what had kept you," said a kindly voice.

"Yes, father, I know I'm late; but I'll tell you all about it when you've let us in and shut the door behind us," she answered mysteriously.

Half-an-hour later, the three were sitting round the supper-table in the quaint octagon room that had been the home of Hans Toralt and his daughter Gerlind ever since the latter had seen the light of day. The old man was custodian of the ancient belfry, and, having lost his wife soon after their child's birth, he had preferred to live on in the eyrie-like dwelling to which he had brought his bride. The stranger, now rested and refreshed, explained to his deliverers how he came to be in such a plight. It was the summer of 1849, when Germany was rent by civil factions, and a fierce struggle for political reforms was going on. Alban Hartland, a student and a patriot, had embraced the cause of independence; and, taking up the sword instead of the pen, had been left for dead on the field after one of the engagements, which terminated disastrously for his cause.

Through the kindness of the peasants in the Black Forest, he had been nursed back to something like health, and enabled to make his way without detection thus far in the direction of the Swiss frontier. The events which led to his meeting with Gerlind were soon told, and he threw himself upon the mercy of his host.

"Though I am too old to take an active part in the contest," said Toralt, "my whole sympathies go with you, and I am proud to think my little girl should have been of service to one who has been wounded in the cause of freedom."

"The little girl" was in reality a tall, fair damsel of seventeen, with a fresh, young face, and merry, honest blue eyes, which looked with no common admiration at the hero she had befriended.

It was decided that Hartland should be allowed a few hours sleep, and then be concealed till the search should be over, and they could mature plans for getting him across the frontier.

Toralt looked out of the window before going to bed, and saw that there were guards bearing torches stationed at intervals round the church below, and he felt sure that in the morning his premises would be subjected to examination. The government had set a price on the heads of the insurgents, and the strictest watch was being kept upon all the frontiers to prevent the escape of the rebels. It was a dangerous position, both for the fugitive and his benefactors, but the old man was resolved to risk all, if needs be, for the safety of his guest.

After a few hours of restful sleep Alban was awakened by Gerlind's voice telling him it was four o'clock, and time to get up.

He had thrown himself down the previous night just as he was, too crippled and exhausted to remove his clothes; so, with a feeble attempt to rearrange his disordered garments, he was soon ready for the simple, but tempting breakfast which he found waiting for him. When and where Gerlind herself had slept was a mystery to him, for she had given up her own room to him, and the accommodation in the tower was distinctly limited. The girl only laughed when he asked how she had fared, and bade him waste no time, but eat all he could, as it was doubtful when he would get anything more.

"Now, follow me," she said, when she thought he had done sufficient justice to the repast. "Father is waiting for you."

She drew back a panel which disclosed a steep spiral staircase, and began to mount it with all the assurance of long familiarity. At the top stood Toralt with a light in his hand, and Alban found himself among the cobwebs and ghostly shadows of the belfry itself. The great, deep-voiced bells hung from massive beams beneath him, and the faint rays of the growing dawn struggled through the narrow slits in the masonry, revealing the dark abyss which seemed ready to engulf them.

The old man led the way across one of the beams, carrying with him a short ladder.

At first Alban hesitated to trust himself on such a perilous path, but the sight of Gerlind walking over an even narrower beam shamed him, and as he started off, rather uncertainly it is true, she shouted out kind, encouraging injunctions to him to walk as if he were in the middle of the road and then he would be all right.

They reached the other side safely, and then Toralt pointed to a dark recess above their heads, against which he had placed the ladder, saying:

"There is just room enough for a man there, but you must curl your legs up and not make a sound when they come to look for you, as I know they will. As soon as it is safe I will fetch you down and get a doctor to dress your wound."

With some difficulty Alban Hartland did as he was told, and if his heart sank when the ladder was withdrawn, his spirits were soon revived by Gerlind's cheery promise to come and see him as soon as she dare. With a smile, she raised the light and took a last look at him in his dusky hiding-place before following her father down to their rooms.

For some time he sat there, thinking over the chain of events that had led him into this situation, and through all the scenes of the past few months, the blue eyes of his latest benefactress seemed to drive into the back-ground even the high aims of his patriotic dreams. After vainly endeavouring to chase away this sentimental fancy, of which he was half ashamed in his own mind, for hitherto his life had been devoted to the pursuit of learning rather than that of pleasure, and the frolics of his fellow students had possessed no attraction for him, an ominous sound from the tower below brought back the sense of danger and fear of discovery.

Men's voices and the rattling of swords were distinctly audible to his keen ear, and in a few moments he heard heavy steps ascending the staircase leading to the belfry. He dare not look, he dare hardly breathe; but he heard them say as they reached the top:

"Well, he doesn't seem to be here, unless he's hang-

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ing on inside one of the bells, and he won't stop there long."

"Perhaps there's a hole on the other side there," said another voice, "shall I go over and see?"

Hartland nearly bit his lips through to prevent his teeth from chattering as he heard this suggestion, but to his infinite relief the prompt answer came:

"No, man, what *are* you thinking of? If you want to put an end to yourself, kindly do it when you're off duty."

They went down grumbling at the disappearance of the man who had so mysteriously escaped from their grasp, and in a few minutes all was quiet again.

In the middle of the day Hartland had a long visit from Gerlind, who brought him some food tied to the end of a pole which she put up within his reach, and while he ate his dinner she sat on the beam and chatted to him as if she had known him all her life. He told her of his own lonely life, that he was an orphan without brothers or sisters, and how he should have to live in exile probably for the rest of his life. Her voice softened, and he fancied there must be tears in her eyes as she tried to comfort him, and asked how his arm had been hurt and whether he was suffering much pain.

"There is a bullet in it, and if I lose the use of my right arm my whole career will be spoilt, unless I can learn to write with my left hand," he answered sadly.

He then went on to tell her of his ambition to become a great writer and, if possible, to effect with his pen what he had failed to further with his sword.

That evening, when he had been released from his hiding-place, Toralt fetched a doctor whom he knew to be friendly to the patriotic cause, and he examined the wound.

He pronounced it to be the work of a spent bullet, which had not penetrated far and could easily be extracted.

Dr. Reichardt was a brisk, practical little man, and while Gerlind was getting the necessary things for the operation he was discussing with the two men plans for Hartland's escape from the town, promising to lend what assistance he could in the matter.

The ball was soon extracted, and Gerlind proved a very capable nurse in the matter of holding and bathing the injured arm, and her sympathetic touch seemed to lessen the pain by awakening counter sensations in the region of the patient's heart.

"Let me see the cause of my misery," said Alban as she was clearing away the traces of the operation.

Gerlind made him no answer, and when he repeated his request she said carelessly:

"Oh, I should think you have had enough of that horrid thing," and passed out of the room without another word.

That evening it was arranged that Hartland should be dressed up as a peasant woman in some of the late Frau Toralt's clothes, happily she had been a tall woman, and on the following night he was to go with Gerlind to the frontier under pretence of carrying a basket of clean linen to the next village.

They had a good laugh over the vain attempts Hartland made to fathom the mysteries of female attire, and more than once Gerlind had to come to the rescue to save her mother's garments from being torn to shreds in his struggles. Some alterations were found to be necessary, so Gerlind set herself to work the next morning to make the dress look presentable. They were chatting pleasantly together, for the old man had gone out to make arrangements for their meeting the doctor that night, when the girl's quick ear caught the sound of footsteps coming up the tower steps.

With one bound she opened the bedroom door, motioned Hartland into the tiny room, and locked him in just as a knock was heard outside. She went and held a whispered conversation with the visitor, who seemed somewhat unwilling to go, till at last Alban heard her say:

"If you want me to go out with you to-morrow, you must let me do my sewing to-day, or I shall have nothing to wear."

This fearful threat appeared to take effect and the visitor departed. Hartland knew it was a man, and the words he had heard sent a chill through his heart. He looked keenly at the girl's flushed face as she came to let him out.

"That was a narrow shave," she panted.

"Why, who was it?"

"Oh, one of the guards—a very old friend of ours," she added with a touch of embarrassment. "I knew he would stay till father came back if I let him in, and he might have heard you."

A look of wistful fear passed over her face as she said this, and Alban was at a loss whether to connect her change of manner with anxiety for himself or annoyance with the would-be intruder. Seeing that she did not seem inclined to talk he offered to read aloud, and looked through her small stock of books, full of wonder and pity at the mental starvation in which she must have been brought up. At last he selected a volume of poems and began reading. They were not such as to appeal to him, being of the sentimental kind affected by young girls and love-lorn spinsters, but he read well, and when he paused to look at his listener he felt sorry he had put so much expression into his voice.

Gerlind had dropped her work and was looking out of the window at the distant snow-clad mountains with all her young soul in her eyes. It was the look of a bird that has just learnt the use of its wings and finds the bars of a cage interposed between it and the freedom it craves.

He turned over the pages and looked for something more cheerful, but as he read on, the disquieting thought forced itself upon him that he would not leave this bright, sunny girl as happy as he had found her. Was it only pity in her heart for him, or had he unwittingly aroused some deeper feeling? He could not take her with him even if he wished to do so, and he was not at all sure that his gratitude carried him so far as to contemplate an alliance with an uneducated girl. It was with a sense of relief that he heard her father's voice calling to her from without.

The night was dark and stormy, rain fell at intervals, and the wind raged round the old tower more like an autumn gale than a summer storm. All was ready for Alban's departure, and he was saying a few last words to his host when the latter remarked:

"I'm sorry we could not keep you longer, but we dare not, for to-morrow is a holiday, and Gerlind's future husband always spends it with us. He is in the guards, and is one of those who was looking for you that night. We have known him a long time, and he's very fond of my Linda, so I want to see them married before I die."

Now the whole thing was clear to Hartland's mind. This explained Gerlind's agitation in the morning, and also threw a painful light on the passionate yearning in her eyes after he had read the love poem to her. She did not love this man, he felt sure, and yet his lips were

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sealed, he could not speak to her now; as with the contrariness of human nature he felt he should like to do.

He took leave of the old man and started off with Gerlind carrying the basket between them. They went through the principal street to avoid exciting suspicion, and passed on till they came within sight of the low wooden house that stood at the toll-gate.

"We'll wait here for the doctor," said Gerlind quietly, and her voice sounded strained and unlike her usual merry tone. They had not spoken to each other, except when necessary, since they had left the tower. In fact neither had the heart for it, and Alban had his face muffled up in a scarf.

The officer in charge of the gate wished them good-night, and invited Gerlind to come in and rest, but she refused, saying they were only waiting for her cousin to take breath before they went on again.

To her intense relief the doctor drove up at that minute and thus diverted the man's attention from them.

"Good evening, doctor, you've a nasty night for your drive."

"Yes, Herr Inspecktor, I have, and I'm in a hurry. A bad case is waiting for me."

The gate was thrown open, and Gerlind, making a sign to Alban, prepared to pass through beside the carriage; but the man stopped them and again asked their business. While she was explaining that her cousin had the toothache and was in a hurry to get home, the doctor, who had fixed a thorn on the end of his whip, touched up his horse, and the animal began plunging violently. The inspector went to the horse's head and tried to quiet him; but he only kicked and struggled more than ever, so that both life and property seemed in danger. Under cover of this exciting episode, Alban and Gerlind were able to pass the boundary unnoticed by the breathless official.

"Now you're safe," panted Gerlind when they had run some distance, "and I must go," she added, with a little sigh.

She helped him out of his dress, and took the silk handkerchief he had worn round his neck with her; the rest she threw over a hedge.

"Good-bye," she added quickly; "you'll find shelter in the village," and before he had time to answer she was gone.

She next moment she was at his side again, and he felt her arms clasped round his neck and her lips pressed to his own. He tried to hold her in his arms; but she was too quick for him, and this time she did not return.

After this Fortune favoured Alban Hartland. He made many friends during his exile, and was able to prosecute his studies under most advantageous circumstances; but he never forgot Gerlind, and when, a few years later, he was permitted to return to his own country, the first place he visited was the old frontier town.

He went to the church and heard from the new custodian that both Toralt and his daughter were dead. They showed him her grave, and from its simple inscription he learnt that she had only lived a year after that memorable night, and that she died unmarried.

He sought out the old woman who had nursed her, and found her very willing to talk about her foster-child:

"Ah, poor Gerlind! She was never strong, and one night she got wet through and was never the same again. It was consumption, like her mother. And the poor child's mind was quite queer before she died. She made me promise to bury her near the little gate, and to put a book of verses and a leaden bullet in her coffin. She never let those two things out of her hands for months before she died. Her old father just broke his heart after her. Poor Linda! She was like my own child."

MARY FERMOR.

JOHN JONAS WILKINSON is a respectable citizen. He has a charming home, a lovable wife, and the cleverest and best baby in town. He has put aside forever all dissipations of his bachelor days—the friendly drink, the other drink, and the eventual cab ride when the frost is beginning to appear on the pavements in the early morning light. He has but one fault, and that one came near his undoing a short time ago. He contracted the Kodak habit, and was unable to break himself of it. Shortly after marriage Wilkinson took his wife to visit a friend who was an enthusiastic amateur photographer. The friend Thomas has four Kodaks, and his bathroom had been converted into a dark room for developing films and plates. His mantelpieces and tables were decorated with Kodak pictures of himself and wife and his baby, his friends and his dog, his house and his bicycles, and other things that Wilkinson never dreamt could be learnt, and before the evening was over he

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took Wilkinson over into the dark room and initiated him into the mysteries of developing a Kodak film.

That settled it with Wilkinson. On the way home he confided to his wife that he intended getting a Kodak and seeing what he could do with it. Two days later he had a big Kodak in the parlour and was striving to make a snap shot of the squirming baby. The fever raged violently as the weeks rolled on, and he began to get results from the experiment. He, too, rigged up a dark room and tried to develop films, but he did not get the go of the thing just right, and was obliged to send most of his work to a city photographer to be finished. The expense was considerable, but when the house began to blossom with pictures that he had taken himself, Wilkinson felt amply repaid. Wilkinson has a friend, a worldly young man, who has thus far escaped the matrimonial meshes, and therefore travels the pace a trifle faster than that of the respectable Wilkinson.

Wilkinson always liked Burrows, though, and has been inclined to condone his numerous offences and escapades for the memory of the good times they once had together. He looks with a mildly reproving eye upon the company Burrows keeps, and never tells his wife about it, but he likes his old chum as well as ever. Two weeks ago Burrows dropped into Wilkinson's office, and, after a chat, observed that he would like to borrow a camera.

"There's a few of us going to have a little luncheon," said Burrows. "Some of the best fellows you ever knew, John, and they are going to bring the girls along, you know, and I thought it would be a good scheme to take a few snap shots at the table and that sort of thing, you know just as a memento."

"Still at the same old game are you?" said Wilkinson laughingly. "Burrows, you ought to settle down, you know, and drop that sort of thing. Really, my boy, you are getting along in years and you ought to be settled in life."

"Never mind that now—let me have the camera," said Burrows. "I'll settle down as soon as I am able to settle up."

"All right," said Wilkinson, "there it is. When you get through I will have the pictures developed for you."

That was how the thing started. Two days later Burrows sent the camera over by a messenger boy, and Wilkinson took it home that night, when it was laid away and forgotten for awhile. One bright Sunday morning Wilkinson had nothing in particular to do and chanced to observe a picturesque pose of the baby.

"That would make a grand picture," he whispered to his wife. "See if you keep him that way while I get the camera."

In a minute or two he had the black box levelled at the baby and had pressed the button. Mrs. Wilkinson changed the pose slightly and adjusted things so she could be in the picture, and again the shutter flashed and there was another photograph in the box. Two more followed, and then the roll was exhausted, and Wilkinson turned to a Sunday paper.

The next day, on his way to business, he stopped at the office of the photographer who did his developing work, and left the roll with the orders that four reprints be made of everything that came out well in development, and for weeks he thought nothing more of it. Then came his Waterloo.

One fatal morning when he was in a hurry to get away, his wife asked about the baby's portraits that he had taken.

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten them," he said. "They must be finished by this time. Suppose you drop in while you are shopping to-day and get them. Have them charged to me."

That afternoon Mrs. Wilkinson hurried into the establishment of the photographer and asked for the photographs.

"Ah, that roll Mr. Wilkinson left. Here it is—some good results too."

He had proceeded thus far with his compliments of the amateur's skill when a shriek from Mrs. Wilkinson startled him. She was holding at arm's length a photograph of a girl leaning on the back of the chair, with a cigarette on her smiling lips.

"This is not my husband's roll, is it?" she demanded.

"Oh yes, ma'am! there can be no mistake," said the photographer in alarm. "See, here is the name Wilkinson on the envelope. There were just twelve pictures, and they are all here."

Mrs. Wilkinson's eyes flashed as she picked up the portrait of another girl holding aloft a glass of champagne and sitting before a well-stocked table. There were other pictures of strange young men with their arms round the willing necks of strange young women, and in amongst them were the innocent little pictures of the baby on the floor of the Wilkinsons' home.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" asked the photographer, with much concern.

"Oh, no—nothing at all," said Mrs Wilkinson, with icy calmness, and a queer pretence at a laugh. "I'll just take these, and you may charge them to my husband."

When John Jonas Wilkinson reached home that evening and walked briskly in, he found his wife sitting on a trunk in the parlour. Near her was a packed handbag. She was pale and calm.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked, gazing at these preparations for a journey. "Is your mother ill?"

"Mr. Wilkinson," said his wife, in firm, hard tones, "I am about to leave your house for ever. Before I go, I wish to tell you why I am going, and what I think of you. I would not run away while you were absent. I wish to let you know all about it."

While this astounding speech was being made, Wilkinson fell back against the door and feebly gasped for breath. His first thought was that his poor wife had gone mad.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he demanded.

"You know all about it," said Mrs. Wilkinson, "you and your wine-bibbing, cigarette-smoking friends! I don't care to discuss that question, but I wanted to inform you that I am going to my mother, and I am going to take baby. Any personal letters which come to me I trust you will be gentleman enough to forward, although I am beginning to doubt whether you have a spark of manliness left in you."

That almost finished Wilkinson. He gasped a few times and finally induced his indignant wife to explain. She showed him the Kodak pictures with a weary smile, observing that they admitted of no argument, they spoke for themselves.

And before he could induce her to unpack her trunk and handbag he was obliged to telegraph for Burrows and have that hopeless rake come to the house and swear to everything about the borrowed Kodak, the wine supper and entire innocence of Wilkinson. Now there is light in the dark room. James Unit.

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THE GOLD MAGNET.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

An Interlude at Home.

About four months had passed since, as everyone concerned in the action off Samana Bay firmly believed, the *Minnehaha*, with all the marvellous possibilities that she had carried, had sunk in fragments to the bottom of the Atlantic. The *Pocahontas* had reached Kingston in a somewhat battered condition as to her masts, funnels, and upper works and with six dead and fourteen wounded on board of her. Two of her lighter guns, and three of her machine-guns were put out of action and three of her boats had been torn to splinters by the accurate fire of the dynamite guns, but happily her hull and her splendid engines were intact and, but for some bad rents in her funnels, her steaming power was as good as ever.

From Jamaica, after she had been refitted as far as possible, she steamed to the Cay on which the first scene of this narrative opened, and there, after a thorough search, aided by the chart which Tristam had obtained from Arthur Pendril, the old Spanish treasure ship was located and dug out. The treasure proved to be even more valuable than was anticipated. It consisted mainly of gold bars and a considerable quantity of ancient gold vessels and ornaments of unmistakable Inca origin, and nearly four pounds weight of magnificent emeralds, rubies, sapphires, turquoises and diamonds, some roughly cut and polished, but the majority of them as they came from the mine. Altogether the *Pocahontas*, including her cargo, was worth nearly four hundred thousand pounds more when she steamed away from the little island than she had been when she first sighted it.

The British Government, in consideration of the great service which, as was believed, had been performed in ridding the seas of the formidable *Minnehaha*, waived such claim as it might have had on the treasure-trove, and a considerable portion of the gold ware was equally divided between the British Museum and the United States Archæological Museum at Washington. The wounded men and the families of those who had been killed were splendidly provided for by the generosity of Tristam and Courtland, who, by-the-way, nearly quarrelled seriously over the sharing of the spoils.

Tristam and his wife wanted to insist on an equal division of what remained after the crew had received their promised shares—to which Courtland replied that he had got all he wanted in the fun and the glory, and that anyhow a few hundred thousand dollars didn't matter to a man who had already more millions than he knew how to spend. The dispute, however, was at length happily settled to the satisfaction of all concerned by a conversation of a strictly private nature which took place between Courtland and Miss Gwynneth Harley a few days after their return to England, and in a subsequent conversation with Tristam and his wife it was arranged that Courtland's share should be handed over to Miss Harley on her wedding-day.

The *Pocahontas* had been sent round to Elswick for a thorough refit, and on the evening of the day on which the compromise had been affected a very jolly little party of four was sitting over the remnants of a comfortable little family dinner in the room in the old house in Gower Street in which the tragedy of the Gold Magnet had begun. Their travels and adventures in the West were still fresh enough to form a very pleasant subject of conversation amidst the quiet and solid comfort of the English home to which Muriel Tristam had so gladly returned. It was not the first time that they had talked them over, and it would probably not be the last, but the subject was none the less interesting on that account.

"Well, as I have said before," said Muriel putting down her coffee-cup, "I think it was after all very fortunate that we did not get the Gold Magnet back. It was not the sort of thing that any ordinary human being ought to have possessed, and I suppose that is why I was superstitious enough to think there was some curse attached to it. Just look what a story it had the little time it was in the world! No one touched it or even saw it without committing some crime or coming to some miserable end. I wonder what really happened to poor Langton and that unhappy boy?"

"I'm afraid it can't have been anything very choice, seeing what hands they fell into; but it's all over now and it's no good thinking about that, anyhow," said Courtland with a glance across the table at Gwynneth, who was looking down at her dessert plate in rather ominous silence. "There's no fun in opening up accounts like that again, but I'm afraid, Mrs. Tristam, I can hardly agree with you about not getting that Gold Magnet back. If I didn't think it was at the bottom of the Atlantic, I'd hunt the world over for it."

"But," said Gwynneth, looking up, "what good would it be to you when you confessed, as you did the other day, to having more millions than you know what to do with. I really can't see why a man who is as disgracefully rich as you are can want to go wasting his time treasure-hunting."

"Except as a means of varying the monotony of the average honeymoon," laughed Tristam with a glance at his wife. "What's your opinion, dear? Don't you think that on the whole we had what our friend Courtland here would call quite a royal time of it?"

"No, I don't," she said with a not very successful attempt at severity. "In fact I consider that, to a certain extent, you married me under false pretences. You know I objected even to the treasure-hunt, but if I had known there was to be pirate chasing and a naval battle thrown in I should certainly have declined with thanks."

"I don't believe it!" said Gwynneth decisively. "Besides,

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Leigh didn't know anything about the fighting, and you know you wouldn't stop behind when you had the chance to."

"Of course not," laughed Muriel. "A nice sort of adventurer's wife I should have made if I had done. But come now, Mr. Courtland, what would you do with the Magnet if you had it?"

"Well, I don't know that I could tell you right away," he replied. "I suppose I should start out and get the biggest accumulation of gold together that ever was seen in one place. Then I guess I should sit down beside it and think what I was going to do with it. Why, a man who could do that, you know, might have the commerce of the world at his mercy, if he only knew how to run the thing properly."

"There spoke the true American!" said Tristam. "I suppose you wouldn't have any objection to corner the whole gold-supply of the world if you could?"

"That's so," observed Courtland, as though the proposition were quite an ordinary one. "I'd corner the force of gravitation if I could. In fact, I wouldn't mind getting an option on the light and heat of the sun and then renting them out to the planets. I just glory in business on a big scale, you know, not for the dollars, but for the pure fun of the game."

"But I suppose," said Gwynneth, "you would begin in a quiet way by satisfying our curiosity about old Don Christoval's treasure-chest. I wonder if poor little Jessie and that scoundrel Lorrain really found it. D'you know I can't help wishing that she hadn't been on board that horrible little ship when she went down. I'm sure it was that wretch of a Spaniard who made her as bad as she was. Doesn't it seem extraordinary when one remembers her going about her work so demurely and quietly as she did, and then having such wonderful adventures and coming to such an end all within a few weeks as it were! I dare say if we had taken her prisoner or something of that sort she might have repented and given us the Magnet back, and then I should have liked to go and find that treasure-chest."

"My dear Gwyn," said Courtland, "if you have any fancy for Santo Domingo as a place to spend a honeymoon in I shall have great pleasure in buying the river Ozama and having it dug up from the source to the sea, and then making you a wedding-present of the chest when we find it, though personally I think we should get more fun out of another sort of treasure-hunt along Bond Street or Regent Street to-morrow."

"Yes," said Tristam, "I think that's more like it under the circumstances. Let's go and see how Streeter's getting on with the setting of those gems and indulge in the luxury of a little glittering extravagance. We can do that with some satisfaction now, and there's certainly this in it, that if we had got the Gold Magnet back we should all have become such bloated Croesuses that Bond Street wouldn't have been anything more to us than the Lowther Arcade."

"I think that will do for the present," said Gwynneth, with a sparkle of pleasurable anticipation in her eyes. "What do you think, Muriel?"

"I think it's a very good idea indeed," she said. "I'm simply dying to spend some money. You'd better come upstairs with me, Gwyn, and we'll talk over our respective wants."

When the two girls had gone, Courtland and Tristam drew their chairs to the fire and got out their cigars. When he had got his fairly alight, Courtland said:

"Well now, old man, as Gwynneth and I have fixed that little matter up satisfactorily, suppose you give me that bit of family history that you promised me some time ago. Of course it isn't going to make any difference to me, as I'm not going to marry any of Gwyn's ancestry to speak of, but a man naturally likes to hear something about the family that he proposes to perpetuate along with his own."

"Very naturally," said Tristam, "and of course you ought to know it. You'll certainly find this peculiarity in it, that while the men have been a remarkably hard lot, just as old Sir Arthur himself was, the women have been everything that English gentlewomen should be. In fact, as far as I know, the only serious fault that can be laid to the charge of any of them, is the *mésalliance* into which her present ladyship managed to stumble. Poor old girl, I wonder what she's thinking about the end of that precious daughter of hers. There's one thing, Miss Jessie represented the one strain of base blood in the family, and I suppose there's not much fear now of her transmitting it to posterity."

"I can't honestly say that I'm sorry," said the other. "Even if she escaped hanging or imprisonment she'd hardly have been the sort of relation a man would have cared to take round very extensively among his friends, although there are some people in the States who'd go clean mad over her. I don't suppose there's a paper in New York that wouldn't give her a hundred thousand dollars for her life, if she was alive to write it. It would be about the finest bit of copy they had had since the time that they filled columns with telling what size collar young Lord Craven wore, what sort of ink he marked his linen with, and how much of the bottoms of his trousers he turned up. Well, go ahead."

For the next half hour or so Tristam went on giving him the history of the Pendril family as far as he knew it, and that was pretty fully; but there were one or two details that he left out, and he ended his story with the death of Sir Arthur and the re-instatement of the present Lady Jessica Pendril in the old home which would now be Gwynneth's when she died.

"Well, yes," said Courtland after a little pause when he had finished, "the men do seem to have been a pretty tough-laid lot; but after all I don't see that they were any worse people to have as ancestors than a good many of our kings and bosses over the other side would be; but somehow when they did go wrong they always seemed to have done it in a gentlemanly sort of fashion. I suppose that comes of having grandfathers instead of just progenitors, as a man says when he doesn't know or doesn't care to say what stock he comes of. But look here, Tristam, there's one thing you've left out. Of course, you needn't tell me unless you like, and I don't want to pry into any family secrets, but I should very much like to know what old Sir Arthur meant when he said that this little lad could never be his lawful heir, although he was the son of his own son."

Tristam smoked for a few moments in meditative silence, and Courtland helped himself to some whisky and soda. Then Tristam knocked the ash off his cigar and said a little awkwardly:

"Yes, I left that out, not because I think it would have been any breach of confidence to tell you, or that, now you are going to marry into the family, you haven't a perfect right to know the truth. It is simply because that is the blackest part of the whole story, so black indeed, that, however the poor little fellow died, his death was a mercy to him, and so was his mother's too, though of course she wasn't fit to live under any circumstances. If she had lived and brought him back to England and claimed the estates, the whole of the shocking story must of course have come out, for I had given Sir Arthur my word of honour to put his confession, for that's what it amounted to, into his lawyers' hands for them to use as they thought fit, but I hope there is no danger of that now, so when you know it you and I will be the only people in the secret, and you, I know, will keep it as close as I have done."

Courtland nodded and said briefly: "You bet!" and Tristam went on:

"It's a pitiful, miserable story, so bad and black that I hardly like to tell it even to you, so I'll cut it as short as I can. Will it satisfy you for the present if I tell you that in consequence of a *liason*, which Sir Arthur got into a good many years ago in Simla, and which resulted in a decree *nisi*, the laws of consanguinity made a legal marriage between his son and Sybil Viney an impossibility? Of

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course, I don't suppose for a moment that either of them had a suspicion of the truth."

"Good Heavens!" said Courtland, turning a trifle pale. "How horrible! Thanks, I think that will be enough for me. I can guess the rest. 'The sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.' If a lesson like that wouldn't keep a man straight, I don't know what would. Let's go upstairs and get into a clean atmosphere."

CHAPTER XL.

News from the West.

The next morning's shopping was quite as distinguished a success as, under the circumstances, it might have been expected to be. The great Bond Street jeweller wanted very badly either to buy some of the gems from the treasure ship or to exchange them for modern jewellery, but neither Courtland nor Tristam would hear of this, as it had already been decided that the whole of this part of the treasure was to be equally divided between the two brides, and become in due course the heirlooms of the new Tristam and Courtland families.

When the shopping was over and the respective bank balances of the two friends had been reduced by some thousands of pounds, Courtland excused himself for half-an-hour in order to drive to his agents in Cockspur Street to get his mail. When he rejoined them later on at the Princes' Restaurant for lunch it struck them that he was looking a good deal graver then when he went away, and his share in the conversation did not come quite so spontaneously as it was wont to do, but he kept his counsel not only through lunch but through the whole afternoon, which was mainly devoted to a matinée at the Haymarket.

They dined at home as usual, and during dinner Courtland's fits of silence became more noticeable, and at last Tristam said:

"You don't seem to have been quite yourself this afternoon, Courtland. I hope you haven't had any bad news from home among your letters?"

"Well, not exactly that perhaps," he replied, "but it's a fact that I've had some pretty serious news. I kept it until to-night because I didn't want to spoil sport this afternoon."

"You dear, good, considerate creature!" said Gwynneth with a rewarding smile. "You let us enjoy our shopping and our theatre unsuspectingly, and saved up your news for to-night, when I suppose you were bursting to tell it all the time. Now, that's a thing that no woman could have done."

"Speak for yourself, miss, please!" said Muriel more soberly. "And how do you know that we are going to be told at all? The news may be private, and I don't suppose Mr. Courtland tells you *everything* yet."

"It isn't private at all," said Courtland. "In fact, it concerns everybody here just as much as it does me, and a few days ago it would have concerned you more. I kept it until now because I thought it would go better told altogether, and there's a good bit of it.

"It's this way," he went on with characteristic directness. "An uncle of mine is Senator for Washington State—not Washington City you know, but the State out west on the Pacific coast, near the Canadian boundary. I've had a long letter from him, which quite confirms those reports we saw in the paper the other day about the steamers bringing the gold from the Klondyke not turning up to time. It seems that the *Portland*, which sailed from St. Michaels six weeks ago, and the *City of Seattle*, which left Juneau a few days later, are both missing. They are supposed to have had between two and three millionsworth of gold on board, and they've vanished utterly. The *Charlston* has been sent out from San Francisco, and a British cruiser from Victoria, to look for them, and nothing more has been heard of them.

"Of course, there's a lot of excitement about it, as the cables in the papers told us; but what the cables didn't tell us is that a mysterious yacht has been traced all up the Pacific coast from Valpariso to *Seattle* and *Victoria*, and that she, too, supposed to be bound for St. Michaels and up the Yukon, has also vanished."

"Surely," said Muriel and Gwynneth almost in the same breath, "you can't mean that she's the *Minnehaha?*"

"Well, that wasn't her name. This one was called the *Circe*, and she had only one funnel instead of two, and her papers were all right, though, of course, that doesn't go for very much. I have no doubt that little blackguard Peters would be quite smart enough to carry a duplicate set, or my cousin Van Suyler may have done so when he started out fillibustering. The funnel's a greater difficulty, but I suppose they could have had that altered. What seems most important to me is that although no one saw the mysterious craft steam any faster than ordinary, when they came to trace her up the coast they found that she must have steamed at a tremendous speed when she got out of sight of land in order to make the ports in the time she did. Another thing, she engaged extra men at Valparaiso and Callao, though she never seemed to have more than an average crew on board. Lastly, they found in Seattle after she'd gone that her owner and captain tallied almost exactly with the description we gave of Lorraine and Peters, and, further, that there were two ladies on board——"

"Jessie and Sybil Viney, of course!" cried Gwynneth who had been listening with open-eyed amazement. "Then we didn't sink that horrible little yacht after all. Leigh, what do you think of that!"

Tristam was looking something like Muriel remembered him on a former occasion in her own sitting-room, upstairs, but he said very quietly:

"Well, if it is so, and of course it's quite possible, because we are not absolutely certain that we did sink her, the only thing to do will be to go and hunt her up again, and either capture her or sink her in good earnest this time, that is, of course, if Courtland is willing, for the *Pocahontas* is the only thing afloat that has any chance with her as regards speed."

"Oh, I'm there," said Courtland. "You needn't be afraid of that. This is a personal matter with me now. I don't take a thing up and drop it again before I'm through, just because I find it a bit hot to hold. The ocean's pretty big, but there isn't room on it for the *Pocahontas* and the *Minnehaha*, as long as she's got her present owner and skipper on board. No, we'll hurry up the refitting and start as soon as can be. We'll have to get a sort of commission this time, I suppose, either from your Government or Uncle Sam, and do the thing in regular form, but do it somehow we must and will."

"That's good hearing!" said Tristam. "I don't think there'll be much difficulty about that. We've proved our good faith already, and they know that if the *Circe* is the *Minnehaha*, yours is the only boat that has a chance of catching her."

"We'll call that settled then," said Courtland, "and now I suppose the first thing to do is to get the *Pocahontas* afloat again. I propose we go up to Elswick to-morrow and hurry them up about it."

Fortunately the Elswick people did not need much hurrying, as the repairs of the *Pocahontas* were already practically finished. Then came interviews at the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, the result of which was that the British Government, without committing itself to any official responsibility, allowed the owner of the vessel to lay in ample stores of ammunition and to ship a dozen experienced gunners at his own expense. He was also given an official recommendation to the Admiral on the Pacific station which set forth the object of the cruise and stated his willingness to receive a responsible officer on board at Victoria before proceeding in search of the pirate. The Admiral was also requested to give Courtland and Tristam

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every assistance in his power on the condition that the *Pocahontas* flew the White Ensign while she was in charge of a British naval officer, but that she should also work in harmony with the American squadron that was patrolling the coasts in search of the *Minnehaha*. Lastly, as it had been decided to make the run to the eastward so as to avoid the bad weather round Cape Horn and in the South Atlantic, she was to carry an order from the Admiralty enabling her to coal at any of the naval stations on the way, so that, so far as weather permitted, she would be able to make the whole journey at nearly full speed.

There was naturally a somewhat lively discussion as to whether Muriel and Gwynneth should accompany the expedition or not, but the ladies as usual had their way and went, at any rate as far as Victoria. Courtland, however, saw an opportunity in this discussion which he took advantage of with characteristic quickness. He absolutely refused to extend the hospitality of the *Pocahontas* to Gwynneth save on one condition—and this in the end she had to yield to, and the consequence was that when the cruiser-yacht at length cleared the Needles and steamed away at a good round twenty-five knots down Channel, she was once more being used for the purposes of a sea going honeymoon as well as for the sterner business of pirate-hunting.

CHAPTER XLI.

The "Minnehaha's" Last Victim.

The short northern summer was slipping fast away, and the mystery which involved the fate of the gold-ships homeward-bound from St. Michael's and Juneau was still unsolved, save for the conviction held by Tristam and his friends that their disappearance could only be due to the work of the *Minnehaha*. Ship after ship had left the northern ports loaded with gold, fresh-won from the inexhaustible treasure-house of the Arctic El Dorado, and carrying, as the ill-fated *Portland* had done, men and women, whom a few months of hard toil and privation had made rich, and therefore happy and hopeful. Ship after ship had steamed out over the grey northern sea never to be seen or heard of again, and meanwhile the treasure in the *Minnehaha's* hold had gone on growing until now nearly fifty tons of gold, in bars and nuggets and dust, awaited division among those who had eclipsed all the crimes of the old piracy to obtain it.

Three gun-boats, one American and two British, had been sent northward to patrol the coast and make inquiries as to the fate of the missing vessels, and the weeks had passed by bringing no tidings until these, too, had been numbered among the missing.

This was the state of affairs when the *Pocahontas*, having fallen in with the Canadian-Pacific mail-steamer *Empress of China* about two hundred miles westward of Cape Flattery, on her voyage from Hong-Kong, convoyed her to Victoria. At Victoria a joint British and United States squadron was lying off in the Straits waiting for her, ready to steam up the coast, and, if necessary, sweep it from end to end in the effort to discover this new scourge of the sea, whose work was done so thoroughly that it left no trace behind it, and either to compel the pirate to disgorge her colossal gains or send her to the bottom with them. Instructions had been sent up to all the ports from which gold could be shipped southward that all treasure must either be kept in the country or forwarded overland until further notice. This had been sent over the newly-constructed land telegraph lines, for all sea communication had absolutely stopped, and from Queen Charlotte Sound to Behring Straits the North Pacific was as silent and mysterious as it had been in the days of its first discovery.

But all this while the *Minnehaha* had been at sea under a full head of steam day and night, ready either to attack or run away, and coal and oil would soon become even more precious than gold unless another capture could be made. Some of the gold-ships had come back very scantily supplied with fuel. Their captains had sold it at enormous prices in the North, and had only kept just enough to steam home with. Consequently they had yielded very little to their captor and destroyer, and the fuel question was becoming a very serious one indeed. In addition to this, the necessity of constantly keeping the sea in waters teaming with animal life had so fouled the yacht's bottom that her speed was materially diminished, and although she was of course still able to steam round the slow-going ocean tramps, both Captain Peters and Lorrain had very serious misgivings as to her being able to hold her own against the torpedo-boat destroyers that might be sent out from Victoria to look for her, to say nothing of the *Pocahontas*, should she return to the chase when the news of the missing gold-ships reached Europe.

There were two courses to be taken, and both of them had been earnestly debated in the *Minnehaha's* cabin. One was to stand out across the Pacific and lie in wait for one of the Empress steamers from Yokohama, treat her as they had treated the gold-ships, and then go on to some conveniently secluded spot, where the treasure could be divided and the yacht handed over to Captain Peters, while Lorrain and her ladyship betook themselves with their millions and the Gold Magnet to some part of South America, there to lose their identity and enjoy themselves quietly until the fame of their exploits had been dimmed by carefully circulated reports of the loss of the *Minnehaha* and all hands.

The other course was to stand into the coast and watch for the steamer *State of Oregon*, which, according to the information received at Seattle, would be sailing from Juneau in three or four days' time. In the end this second course was decided upon, partly because, even with the colossal treasure they had on board, neither Lorrain nor Captain Peters could resist the chance of one more *coup*, but mainly because, after a careful examination, the skipper came to the conclusion that it would not be safe to enter upon a four or five thousand-mile run without a considerable addition to the fast-dwindling stock of fuel. Had the other alternative been taken the probability is that the *Minnehaha* would have fallen in, not only with the *Empress of China*, but with the *Pocahontas* as well, in which case the final scene in the tragedy of the Gold Magnet would have been played out in mid-Pacific, the fifty tons of stolen gold would have now been lying buried under several thousand fathoms of water, and the Gold Magnet itself would have been lost to the world for ever.

It so happened that the *State of Oregon* was the last ship to sail with treasure from St. Michael's before the prohibition just mentioned came into force, and it also came to pass that, just at nightfall on the day on which the *Minnehaha* made the land of Graham Island, which with Moresby Island and a multitude of islets makes up the Queen Charlotte group, Her Majesty's Destroyer *Mallard*, on scout duty at the mouth of Dixon's Entrance, saw her smoke and sped away southward to rejoin her consorts, which were her sister-destroyer the *Quail* and the *Pocahontas* herself.

She managed to join them unseen, and as soon as she had given her welcome news the *Quail* sent off full speed to carry it to the Admiral in command of the joint squadron, and ask him to bring his ships as rapidly as possible up Hecate Strait, which runs between the islands and the mainland, so as to cut off the pirate's escape to the southward, if the *Pocahontas* and her consorts succeeded in shutting her into the narrow waters—after which the *Quail* returned to take her share in the sport.

The *State of Oregon* had left Juneau the previous day, and had steamed southward through the intricate channels between the Alexander Archipelago and the coast. This was rightly considered to be a much safer course than the open sea route, as it was very unlikely that the pirates would venture so close into the land, or run the risk of getting entangled in the narrow waterways among the islands. This was perfectly correct, and if the gold-ship

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had been a few hours earlier or later, she would have escaped the fate which awaited her, and had the honour of being the only vessel to get her precious cargo safely into port.

The *Minnehaha*, all unconscious of the little black craft that was flying away to the southward, bearing the fatal news, steamed boldly into Dixon's Entrance under cover of a slight mist and the deepening twilight. Boldness and rapidity of action were now her safest tactics, for it was absolutely essential that she should replenish her bunkers as speedily as possible. If she could not do that she would not be able to keep the sea for another week, and then sooner or later she must fall a prey to one of the war-ships, which were so diligently seeking her. In short, a few tons of coal and a few barrels of petroleum would make all the difference now between escape and prosperity, or capture and death.

Tristam and Courtland and the naval commander who had been taken on board at Victoria had very little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the vessel reported by the *Mallard* could not well be any other than the *Minnehaha*, She could not be a gold-ship from St. Michael's. In the first place, none was due to leave until after the prohibition would have reached the Yukon, and, in the second place, all the St. Michael's ships would make a direct course across the Gulf of Alaska and would not touch the islands at all. Then, again, they easily guessed that the pirates would be in difficulties about fuel, and would have to come in sooner or later on the chance of picking up either the *State of Oregon* or some other coasting-steamer and taking her coal out of her.

They knew that Lorrain had got accurate information as to the sailing of the gold-ships, and so, taking everything into consideration, they felt justified in concluding that the steamer from Juneau was the bait that was attracting the *Minnehaha* into the trap they were laying for her.

"I hope that hooker won't be much behind time, Seenyor," said Captain Peters to Lorrain as they went slipping along close under the north coast of Graham's Island. "We can't spare the fuel to wait for him very long, and I'd just hate to be caught in here among these islands by any of them cruisers that'll be looking for us by this time. We mightn't get away with her as easy as we did with the gun-boats, but coal we must have. We didn't get more than forty tons out of that last one and, excepting that fifty that I'm keeping for a last rush in case of accidents, we haven't got enough for a full day's steaming."

"Oh, there's no doubt about that!" replied Lorrain shortly. "Coal we want and coal we must have, whatever it costs, even if we have to fight for it. I reckoned on getting a hundred tons apiece at least out of those other ships. Who the deuce would have thought that they would only have just enough to carry them home! It only shows how the smartest of us can make the simplest mistakes. Ah, look out yonder over the port bow! Do you see a light? There, almost dead ahead! I'm certain I did just then. Quicken her up and let us go and see what it is. I shouldn't wonder if we've caught her in the very nick of time."

Captain Peters snatched up his glass out of the case hanging on the bridge-rail in front of him and took a long, silent, anxious look in the direction that Lorrain was pointing.

Then the mist lifted a little from the water and he caught the distant glimmer of a green light.

"Bully for you, Seenyor! That's her, or maybe something else that has coals aboard. I guess our luck hasn't petred out yet. If we can get another hundred and fifty tons out of her we'll skip southward, hold up one or two tramps, fill from them, and make tracks. This part of the world's getting unhealthier for us every day, and we want to be well out of the way before your friend Tristam brings that hooker of his out looking for us. We couldn't race her for shucks now. I reckon thirty's about the outside we could do now, and that would take an almighty lot of coal."

As he spoke he rang for full speed, and the *Minnehaha* sprang forward with an added ten knots. The green light seemed to run towards them, and a few minutes later the black hull of a large steamer loomed out through the grey mist.

The *Minnehaha* carried no lights and had run alongside the *State of Oregon* almost before she was sighted Then came the usual hail and order to lie to, followed by the usual panic when it became plain to those on board the gold-ship that the wicked-looking little craft could be none other than the mysterious and much-dreaded pirate whose unknown deeds were already the wonder and the speculation of the whole coast.

But the captain of the *State of Oregon* was made of sterner stuff than the captain of the *Portland*, for instance, had been, and he answered the summons to surrender with a flat refusal couched in anything but drawing-room language.

If he had to be sunk, as the others no doubt had been, he would go down with his gold and his coal on board, for he was fully determined that the pirates should get no steaming power out of his ship. Added to this, he felt pretty certain that there must be war-ships somewhere about the Strait and possibly within sound of guns. To surrender meant to be sunk after his ship had been rifled, and so his one hope of safety lay in a rescue. Consequently he sent orders to keep the engines working at their utmost power whatever happened, and passed the word for the crew and male passengers to get up their arms and prepare to make a running fight of it. The order was obeyed both below and on deck in a grim silence, and rifles and revolvers and ammunition were got out with a readiness which promised not a little blood-letting before the pirates got their way with the treasure-ship *State of Oregon*.

The point-blank refusal to surrender not only infuriated Lorrain and Captain Peters, but it put them into a very awkward dilemma. The very last thing they wanted to do was to open fire. They knew very well that the noise of the cannonade might easily attract the notice of some prowling warship, and in addition to that they might just as well, or even better, let the gold-ship alone than send her to the bottom, for in that case the priceless coal would go with her, so, after a hurried consultation, Captain Peters ran up closer and offered to allow the treasure-ship to proceed unmolested in consideration of a hundred tons of coal, to which the captain of the *State of Oregon* replied tersely:

"I'll see you where coals ain't wanted first. All you get from me you'll have to take. I ain't fitting out any pirates this trip. There's a squadron of warships down the Straits, and the sooner you start shooting the quicker they'll come up, so blaze away and be darned to you!"

Now, whether this was true or not, it made the situation a very awkward one. Still neither Captain Peters nor his owner was the man to let the precious coal go without a struggle. They offered fifty pounds and then a hundred pounds a ton for it, paid down in gold, but all the answer they got was a warning to sheer off or stand the chances of a volley. At this Captain Peters lost the last remnants of his temper and his prudence, and gave orders for two of the Maxims to prepare to open fire.

"There's nothing else to be done, Seenyor," he whispered. "They've got a lot of rifles on deck there, and if we let them shoot first some of us may get hurt. It isn't going to be no Sunday-school treat, this isn't."

Then he pulled out his own revolver and opened the ball by sending a bullet into the chest of the brave captain of the *State of Oregon*. The next instant the harsh thudding roar of the Maxims crashed out, the two streams of bullets swept the decks of the treasure-ship from end to end, strewing them instantly with scores of dead and dying.

(To be concluded next week.)

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All about the King of Funny Papers, Edited by the King of Funny Men.

It will be hot from the Press and ready for you on

One Halfpenny.] TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd. [One Halfpenny.

Previous notices in [illegible] of my Comic Journal have doubtless aroused your curiosity, which I am now able to satisfy fully. Hosts of my friends have besieged me personally and through the post in the hopes of learning before the right time what Dan Leno's Comic Journal is going to be like. But up till this moment they have not been satisfied. When the news of my Comic Journal leaked out I was pestered by all sorts of folks begging me to grant various requests of a more or less expensive nature—mostly more. The suggestions I received from my friends and acquaintances would last me for half a century, and furnish material for seventeen papers of extraordinary size.

Three people sent me minute instructions of how it was to be run, two gratuitously. A gentleman in the North of England sent me 2lb. of poetry written by his daughter, and implored me to give the dear girl a start by printing a few ounces of it in the first number; while a lady residing in Kent said she and four of her friends thought what a capital idea it would be to print an insurance coupon every week insuring babies against juvenile ailments. Her letter ended: "N.B.—I have six children."

Circulars came pouring in every morning reminding me that Green's Patent Braces and Jinks' Cough Syrup were unrivalled, and that if I cared to say so in my Comic Journal I might have a few samples and test them. But all such kind and generous appeals I have had to disregard, for my paper has to be run on strictly business lines, and not as an advertising medium or a charity affair.

My first care will be to carry out the idea in the title of my new journal and make it really comic. There will be nothing in it that the most sensitive of us can take offence at. It will be crammed with humourous pictures, side-splitting jokes, and good stories. Never before will such a collection of first-class pictures and good literature have been sold for so small a sum.

But you must get a copy on Tuesday and use your own judgment. You will say I am right.

Every week I shall chat, and talk, and joke with my readers. All my funniest experiences will be confessed in the columns of "Daniel's Diary." Nor will the comic element monopolise everything. The opening chapters of a magnificent serial,

"THE MARK OF MYSTERY,"

will appear in the first number. "The Mark of Mystery" has been written specially for Dan Leno's Comic Journal by one of the best known authors of the day. You will read every word of it and long for more.

It is the story of a triple crime, a story of stirring incident, mystery, true pathos, and genuine humour.

Don't miss this wonderful story, and don't forget that it begins on Tuesday in Dan Leno's Comic Journal.

Everyone likes a good short story, but good short stories are difficult to obtain. If you will turn to page 3 of Dan Leno's Comic Journal you will find one of the best.

Each week Dan Leno's Comic Journal will contain a short, complete story of entrancing interest—in fact, the finest stories that money can buy and authors write.

If you want a good laugh—not a mere half-hearted chuckle, but a hearty, honest laugh—buy Dan Leno's Comic Journal; if you would like to try for a big prize, be at your newsagent's early on Tuesday.

Dan Leno's Comic Journal is the most colossal collection of good things ever sold for the price in the history of journalism.

Remember, it will be published every Tuesday; it will consist of the cleverest work of all our best authors and artists; it will cost only One Halfpenny.

The first number will be on sale everywhere on Tuesday, February 22nd.

There will be hundreds of funny pictures, hundreds of side-splitting jokes, one of the finest serials ever penned, short stories, mirthful anecdotes, and a whole host of other fascinating reading.

Everything in it will be fresh and racy—it will not contain a dry line or a stale joke.

Order your copy at once.

I hope to meet you all again on Tuesday. Until then,

I remain,

Yours sweetly,

Dan Leno

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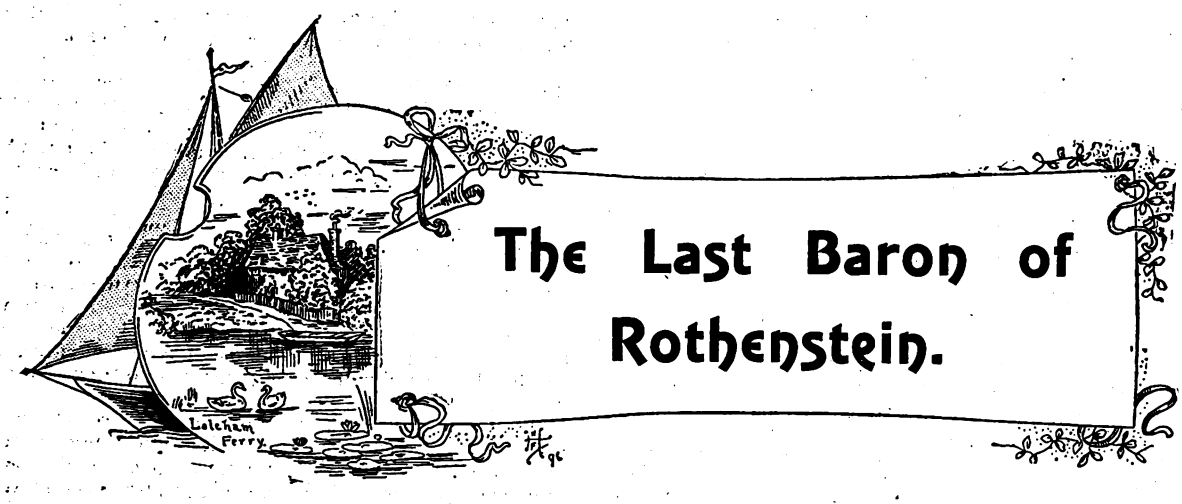

The Last Baron of Rothenstein.

In many parts of Germany, especially along the borders of that great tract of wooded mountains and valleys called the Thuringian Forest, a mountain top without its castle would be an anomaly strange enough to call forth a wondering question. Some of these edifices are mere ruins, but others are still in good condition, and inhabited by the descendants of those who built them.

Rothenstein, overlooking the little village of Egersdorf—these are fictitious names on account of the story that follows—is one of the ancient German castles which are still habitable. Like all its companions in the German Empire, the castle is full of legendary matter; every room, every corridor, has some story attached to it, and most of these legends are gruesome enough.

At the present time, the only occupants of Rothenstein are an old caretaker and his wife. Visitors are permitted to inspect the castle, but there is one portion of it to which only specially-privileged persons are admitted. That is the picture gallery. If you ask why it is always kept closed, you will be told simply that the Baron was found dead in the gallery.

Last autumn, while spending my holiday in the Thuringian Forest, I secured the privilege of inspecting the castle, including the picture gallery. It was an uncanny place, that gallery of portraits; even I felt a creeping sensation in the small of my back, and I could hardly be surprised that the caretaker did not venture across the threshold. I glanced at a few of these pictures of knights of old, and was about to retrace my steps when my eyes fell upon a portrait that compelled my attention.

It hung in the most prominent place in the room—for it was a room, not a gallery—over the fireplace opposite the door; it was so remarkable than I cannot imagine how it happened that it did not strike me as soon as I entered. It was a life-sized figure of a cavalier of the seventeenth century, in doublet and hose, with his hand upon the hilt of the rapier at his side. The face was that of a man about fifty, and so real was the representation of the countenance that it seemed to stand out from the canvas as if it were flesh and blood; the eyes were cold and determined, and the mouth was shut close and hard, as if with unalterable purpose. It was a stern face, though one hesitated to call it a cruel one; yet it betokened a will that would brook no opposition, and a heart that knew no forgiveness. I discovered afterwards that he fell in the battle of Lutzen.

Before leaving the castle I tried to obtain from the old man some particulars concerning the death of the Baron, and the reason for keeping that room closed. I felt that the portrait was mixed up in the story; but all I could get from him was that old Marie knew. She lived in the village, and had been his nurse. It did not take long to find the old woman, but I had to pay several visits before I could persuade her to tell me what she knew. At length I succeeded.

I cannot give it exactly in her own words, for it was broken, and there was much that I had to elicit by judicious questions; but the following is the narrative in coherent form:

"Hugo von Rothenstein, over two hundred years ago, rebuilt the castle that had always belonged to his family, and left it as it stands to-day, for the buildings themselves have never since been changed, though there are now gardens where there used to be walls and ditches. He lived much in foreign parts—now in this country and now in that—and sometimes years would go by before he returned. Only a part of the castle at that time could be lived in; the rest was old, and had gradually become almost a ruin. One spring, after a long absence, he appeared unexpectedly, and soon after, a great many men were at work tearing down and replacing the oldest parts and adding new ones. A year after this time, when the south wing had been completed, he brought back a beautiful young Englishwoman as his bride. For a number of years they lived up at the Rothenstein in peace and happiness, while the one son that had been given to them was growing up, and by-and-bye he, too, in his turn went away, as his father had done before him, to see the world outside. I do not know just where it was, but in another part of Germany he fell in love with a girl of his own rank, and came back and announced his intention of making her his wife. To his surprise and consternation, the father, who, it seems, had designs for him in a wholly different direction, absolutely refused to countenance it; and not only that, he set himself like flint against it, and forbade him passionately to have anything further to do in the matter.

"The son was, however, made of just as determined

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stuff as his father, and without more ado, as soon as he could get to her, married the girl out of hand. What he ought not to have done, in hope of forgiveness from one who did not know how to forgive either in this life or after it"; and the old woman paused with a look on her as if she, too, had been an actor in this drama two centuries ago.

"Before many months had passed the son brought his young wife to the Rothenstein. In spite of the prayers and supplications of the mother, who threw herself on her knees before him, old Baron Hugo did not even allow his son to enter the castle, but reviled him outside like a dog, and not only him, but his descendants to the remotest generations. The son never returned again in his father's lifetime. The mother soon after died, it is said, of a broken heart, and the old Baron himself went abroad and finally was killed at Lutzen. A year or two after he was dead, the great picture of him that now hangs at the head of the picture gallery, over the fireplace, was sent from abroad—some say from Spain—where it was painted by one of their greatest artists; but mark my word," she added impressively, "no human artist painted that picture that has blighted the whole house for all these years, and nobody suspected it until I saw it with my own eyes."

Her vehemence had exhausted her, and it was some time before she went on.

"After his father's death, the son came back with his wife and a boy, their only child. The picture gallery at that time had not been completed, as I have heard, and the portrait of old Hugo hung in the long corridor. There, early one morning, they found the knight of the Rothenstein dead, pierced to the heart, they said, by the sword that he even then held tight in his hand.

"It is a gloomy story that follows," old Marie added wearily. "Old Baron Hugo's grandson finally completed the picture-gallery, and the portrait was hung where it is to-day, but where it would not be if I had my way. The Baron was only a man of forty, as you may still see on the stone in the chapel, when one day he was found dead, and, like his father, evidently by his own sword that lay beside him. This time, however, the deed had been done in the picture-gallery. Neither in his own case nor in that of his father was there any apparent reason for such an act. They had both lived peaceful lives, without harassment or care.

"For six generations the story I have told you has been the same. My Hugo's great-grandfather, his grandfather, his father, and finally he himself, have all gone the same way—all have died alone from a sword thrust in the heart. A bane, everybody said, had fallen on the family, that impels them all to take their lives—old Baron Hugo's curse when he drove his son away—but they never thought of the thing that I knew was the real cause of all this misery.

"My Hugo," continued the old woman, "was as fine and frank a lad as the old castle had ever seen. He always had a happy life, but sometimes I could not bear to watch him, for I knew how certain was the fate that hung over him. But he never suspected it, and grew up and went away, and then came back a man, full grown, and handsomer than his father or his grandfather, whom I remember to have seen as a child. And by-the-bye he brought a wife to the Rothenstein, and they were very happy together, and two children were born. They are all away now, and have never been back since he died."

It was a long time before she resumed her story, "Ten years ago this very day was his thirtieth birthday, They were all so happy The Baroness and the children had surprised him with their gifts, and we had all congratulated him, I first of all. There was no invited company, but it was a holiday at the castle, and the flags were flying, and flowers had been placed everywhere, and there were to be lanterns out under the trees in the evening, but they were never lighted. Late in the afternoon," her voice trembled almost to a whisper, "I was going alone along the corridor, past the door of the picture gallery. The long passage itself was empty, but when I was exactly opposite the door I heard the quick stamp of a foot, and then the click of steel striking against steel. At first, I could not believe my ears, and I stopped still and listened. All at once it came upon me what it meant. O Heaven! I thought, to-day! to-day! and though I could scarcely move, I trembled so, I threw myself against the door and burst it open.

"There, in the middle of the room—Heavens! that I should ever have lived to see it!—stood my Hugo, his sword drawn in defence; and opposite him his cold eye fixed upon him, and his rapier just ready to thrust, was the old Hugo of the picture there in the flesh again. And while I was looking, in an instant the thrust had been given, and my Hugo threw up his arms and fell, and, even as he reeled, the old man coolly wiped his sword, and put it back in the scabbard at his side. Only then I shrieked at the horror of the thing, and fell fainting across the threshold.

"It was dark when I came to myself again, and some time before I could realise what had happened and give the alarm. It was too late; my Hugo was dead. Again, they whispered, the curse had fallen, and the Baron of the Rothenstein has taken his life. They would not listen to my story when I told them how he had fought for his life, where no human arm could prevail, and how foully he had been murdered under my very eyes. But, as God is my witness, I saw him fall, and old Hugo von Rothenstein struck the blow!"

This was old Marie's story, and, though we questioned her more minutely as to some of its points, nothing could cause her to vary its details, or could shake her belief in its truth.

We met the physician of the district once at Marie's cottage, and afterwards took occasion to question him about her story, which we found he had heard. He had been called, it appeared, to the castle, as soon as the body of the Baron had been discovered, and it was true that Marie had first come upon it in the picture gallery, where it lay on the floor. There was nothing to show, he said, that he had not committed suicide, and the sword, an old French rapier that had been taken down from among the weapons in the room, lay a short distance from him, where he had flung it as he fell. "There was no blood on the blade," he added thoughtfully, "as I remarked at the time, but that may be accounted for by purely natural causes, for, like many others in the collection, it had been oiled to keep off the rust."

Marie's story had made a profound impression upon us, and once more we questioned her about its incidents, but she shook her head, and said she should never tell it again. Later in the summer her health failed fast, and one day, on our way to her cottage, our friend, the physician, met us and told us she was dead. "And her story, doctor," we asked, "did you believe it?"

"She certainly believed it," he said, "and who shall say that it may not have been true?"

W. H. Carpenter.

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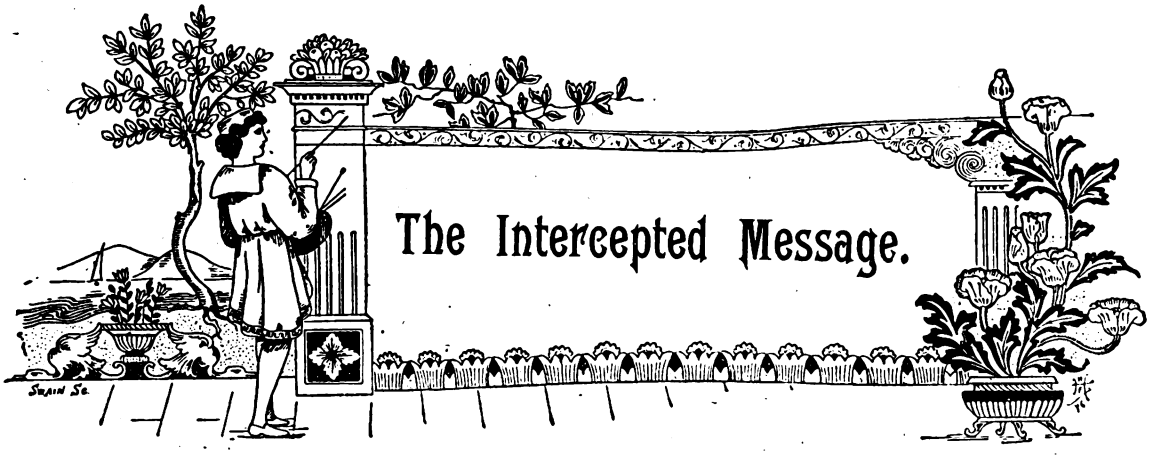

The Intercepted Message.

Sitting in a Birmingham hotel one November evening, carelessly running over the headings of a newspaper, I had my eyes and wandering thoughts arrested by a paragraph that stirred some pleasant memories. Stepping to the table near at hand I was clipping the item of news when a handsome, athletic young fellow approached from the opposite side, knife and paper in hand. A moment later each noticed that the other was preserving the same information. Our eyes met, his brown and laughing, mine blue and aggressive.

"Beg pardon," he began with a smile that lighted up his dark face and showed his strong white teeth to advantage, "odd coincidence, isn't it?"

"I don't know," with some constraint. "Up to a short time ago my experience was so entirely along one pleasant line that my thoughts never went outside it. Of late, surprises have come so rapidly that they cease to surprise. Do you know her?"

"I'm inclined to think it my privilege to do the interrogating in this instance, but you have already satisfied my chief curiosity in the matter. If you were not acquainted with Margie Morell you would scarcely be putting that flattering criticism away into your pocket-book."

"You speak familiarly of her;" and despite my efforts to imitate his easy manner there was a challenge in my voice.

"Naturally enough;" and his smile was the more aggravating because the more genial. "I have known her for years. Used to carry her books, haul her on her little cart, walk with her, ride with her, encourage her when success in music seemed so far off, and all that. Held her on my knee a thousand times."

Now there was no effort at self-control on my part.

"You are a scoundrel and a blackguard!" I whispered, as I leant over the table. "If I ever hear of your repeating such language I'll find a way to punish you without involving the name of the young lady you have been coward enough to slander."

No change in his smile, but a little more blood in his face, as he said:

"Rather quick-tempered, it seems to me."

"Yes; but a man who tries to retain the virtues of chivalry without its faults. I wish to say nothing more to you."

"But I like you; I insist on pursuing the acquaintance. It makes me happy to chance upon so stout a champion of Margie."

I was on the point of saying or doing something violent, when he continued:

"Hold on a minute, my bold chevalier;" and this time he laughed outright. "I'm Fred Morell, Margie's brother. In fact, I'm the responsible head of the family. Have you any special right to fight the battles of my sister?"

"Only the right of a gentleman who holds her in the highest respect," I replied, somewhat taken aback. "I met her abroad with her mother. I was completing my education in medicine, and Miss Morell was cultivating her wonderful voice. In the midst of an acquaintance so delightful to me I received news of my father's sudden death, and with it the startling information that disastrous speculation had wiped out the large fortune that I had always been led to expect. I hastened home, spent six months in settling up the affairs of the estate, and have just come here to see what I can make of talents that have never yet been called upon to earn anything."

"It might have been worse. You are Dr. Tom Curran. I've heard them speak of you frequently. Why not take a run out with me and renew the acquaintance?"

It was a temptation, and we are prone to compromise with temptation. I could not go then because I was to spend a couple of weeks with my one relative, Uncle Bruff Curran, who lived a mile or two out of Birmingham. But when Fred and I parted it had been arranged that I should spend a week with the Morell household.

At Uncle Bruff's I was having a glorious time, though he was a bachelor of sixty, and cynical as he was rich. My strange experience there began one afternoon when I was out shooting.

The sport was fast and furious, and I was banging away without any precautions, for the game was in a desolate preserve, and the thought of danger to anyone else never entered my mind. But my confidence in the fact of my complete isolation was brought up with a short turn. I had just let go with both barrels at a flying bunch of quail, when I heard a shout of terror and witnessed a laughable sight.

It was a man literally dropping down a telegraph pole, his eyes big with fright, and a false beard shifted to the side of his face. The fine shot had peppered him

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harmlessly, but he thought that he had been fired upon, and was beginning to plead for mercy when I approached him. A ringing laugh reassured him, and he managed to tell me in a quiet, natural manner that he was along the line making some repairs.

In my amusement I quite forgot the false beard, and that fact slipped from my memory till long afterwards.

When I went in I found a new guest at the house. He was manager of the then leading bank in Birmingham, of which uncle was a director and large shareholder. After dinner we smoked together, and the two old men told me what had brought the manager there.

A short time before two smart and distinguished-looking gentlemen had flashed upon the most exclusive social circle of the city. They dressed just within the extreme of fashion, spent money with princely prodigality, and one of them had placed £4,000 in their bank just to meet the expenses of the brief visit. He had been introduced to the manager's family, and made such an inroad upon the daughter's affections that their engagement was currently reported. This depositor had unexceptional letters, and each one guaranteed him entitled to unlimited credit.

One afternoon he rushed hurriedly into the bank. He just had had a letter from one of his best and wealthiest friends in Liverpool. He was to have met a Birmingham lawyer that very day to pay a balance on £15,000 on an important concession abroad. Business involving an enormous sum kept this Liverpool financier at home, and, despite his wealth, he did not have the ready money to meet the engagement. Would his old friend, known in Birmingham as Lawrence Bochart, draw on his own funds and look after the matter. There was an assured profit of several thousands, and they would share it.

"Is it all right?" asked the manager, who was dazzled with Bochart and his apparently fabulous riches.

"I would like to help my friend, for it is my disposition. But let me insist that you first telegraph my bank in London, to see whether it will honour a draft for the amount required. For your kindness in the matter I want you to accept half the gain which my friend will make through the deal."

"I cannot think of it," replied the manager.

"Then, sir, let me make it a wedding present to your daughter. I have not asked her hand, but, with your permission, I will do so."

"I sent the telegram at once," said the manager to my uncle and myself. In half-an-hour I had an answer, signed by the manager, informing me that Mr. Bochart's account was far more than equal to the demand made upon it. I may have been blinded somewhat by the impression the young man had made upon me, and the prospect of having him for a son-in-law, but I took the usual precautions, though the largeness of the amount at stake might have demanded more.

We went to the hotel and paid the lawyer in cash, as stipulated by the terms of the contract. He said that he would have preferred it in a draft, as less risky to carry about, but he would be round before the close of banking hours to deposit the sum with us. I had no sooner returned to the bank than I received a telegram from the London bank, saying that Lawrence Bochart had no account there, and never had. Then it came upon me with the force of a terrible blow that the wire must have been tapped, that we were swindled, and that the bank was crippled beyond hope of recovery. For myself, I was ruined.

"Of course," continued the manager, "the rascal who cut such a dash in Society did not distribute his photographs, but my daughter is something of an artist, and she sketched the fellow from memory. Here he is, and we'd gladly give a large reward to recover the amount of the robbery."

The two older gentlemen took a look at the picture and then passed it to me. An exclamation of surprise had almost passed my lips, but I was a fortune seeker myself, and here was an unexpected opening. The picture was that of Fred Morell. Why should I not win the reward offered for the recovery of the stolen money? I had seen the wire-tapper, and I knew the man who had so successfully played his part in Birmingham.

Two days later I was on my way to visit the Morells. I had no idea that Fred would be there to receive me, but then he was not the chief attraction! I had said nothing to the two old gentlemen of what I knew, or what I had in mind! But I had decided to play the novel part of a detective, and lay the foundation for some such fortune as I had always expected to inherit.

Fred Morell met me at the door of his house, and a welcome could not have been more hearty. His mother was one of the most gracious of the old school ladies, and her daughter was even more fascinating in her wondrous beauty that when she had won my love beyond the ocean. I could not enjoy such hospitality and then bring a sorrow worse than death upon those who offered it. I asked a private talk with Fred, and frankly told him what I had learnt, and how I had started out to recover the stolen money. There was mingled anger and contempt in his face as he answered me.

"You have taken me for a scoundrel again," he said; "but I must admit the force of the evidence. Cousin Bob has broken loose once more. Seen apart, we have always been taken one for the other. He is a wonderful man, and his talents, properly directed, would win him almost any position. But his inclination is to go wrong, and he does not restrain it. Your mission is to bring him to book. If you like, I will go this far with you. He is rich through inheritance and fraud. Together we will run him down and secure a return of the money lost by the bank. We will make him leave the country for good, but without such an arrangement I will lend you no assistance. He is the first to bring disgrace on the family name, and I care more for it than for his punishment."

A load was lifted from my heart, and never was there a more delightful Christmas spent than in that old homestead. There I was convinced that Margie's hand was mine when I should claim it, and time justifies the blissful confidence.

In London we found the man whom I had surprised in hunting. Through fear he was induced to discover the whereabouts of "Cousin Bob." With the sauvity of a diplomat and a running fire of wit, he accepted our terms. He assured us with unblushing raillery, that the manager's daughter had pierced his heart, that he had voluntarily decided upon a residence abroad, and that it afforded him inexpressible pleasure to comply with our wishes.

I put the bank on its feet again, made the old manager the happiest man in the country, tickled Uncle Bruff, so that he named me his sole heir, and made Margie Morell my wife. I'll say nothing of myself, but Mrs. Dr. Tom Curran's receptions are the most popular and most sought after in one of the greatest cities of the country.

Horace Ray.

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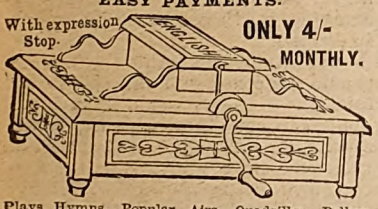

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

EVERY reader of *Short Stories* should make a point of securing a copy of *Home Notes*, now on sale. With every number will in future be given away a complete novel and a coloured plate.

HARPER T.—Yes, dogs are very great pets among the ladies of fashion in Paris, and a special industry has been created in consequence. Several shops are tenanted exclusively by outfitters for the canine race. Blankets, hats, coats, shoe-gloves, and lace handkerchiefs of the most luxurious kind are purchased by women for the sole use of their pampered pets.

R. V.—The "sinking fund" is composed of that money put aside by the Government for the liquidation of the National Debt. As the bonds purchased are subsequently withdrawn from circulation, they are said to be "sunk."

RESULT of "Empress" Competition will appear next week.

W. D. D.—There is no difference whatever between the words Tsar and Czar. The Russian alphabet contains many letters for which the English has no equivalent; consequently, various spellings of the same Russian word have been adopted by different authorities in the endeavour to convey the true Russian pronounciation.

LAMP.—The most curious city in the world is situated on Saginaw Bay, an arm of Lake Huron. It is without a name, has a population of about 500, and consists of modern huts on wheels, to the number of 150, which, when the fishing season arrives, are rolled on to the ice in the bay.

C. S. L.—The word "Parliament" first appeared in the laws of England in 1272. Previous to that the law-making community was called the "Witanagemot."

COLLET.—Certainly your experiment proves that the sustaining powers of chocolate are not over-estimated. Two or three years ago a very much greater test was made by a Frenchwoman, who for sixty days took no other form of food. At the end of that time she had only lost fifteen pounds in weight.

JABEZ.—The custom of which you speak obtains among the daughters of the House of Hapsburg, whose bridal trains, on finishing an honourable career in the ballroom, are bestowed, after the ceremony, on the church whose sacred floor they have swept. During the centenary celebration at Rennweg the altar floor was covered with a sheen of satin and silver that had once formed part of Marie Antoinette's wedding-dress.

WORKMAN.—You are certainly better off than the Italian labourer. He may be worthy of his hire, but he receives wretched pay nevertheless. One franc twenty-five centimes (one shilling), sometimes even eighty-five centimes (eightpence halfpenny), for a day's work of thirteen hours, with cooked herbs and black bread for food — this is the usual rate of pay.

A. N.—Windsor Castle was first used as a Royal residence 788 years ago.

PUZZLED inquires: "Is it usual for a lady to pass in the street a gentleman with whom she danced a few nights before, without bowing?"——Introductions at a dance are generally acknowledged to be a mere formality to be gone through before two people can dance together; but they do not justify a continuance of the acquaintance, unless it is the wish of both persons concerned

V. C.—The reason decaying wood looks luminous in the dark is because it is really undergoing a slow combustion.

W. S. asks: "How is it that as a rule deaf people can hear what is said to them better in the midst of a din than when all is quiet around them?"——Because the increased noise helps to make up the volume of sound necessary to reach their impaired organs. An amusing illustration of this fact was afforded by a very deaf old gentleman, who lived quite alone. On the very rare occasion when he had a visitor, he used to keep poking the fire and causing the ashes to rattle on to the grate, so that by the help of the additional noise he might catch what his caller had to say.

M. P.—An "embargo" is an order from the Government, usually issued in time of war, or threatening hostilities, prohibiting the departure of ships or goods from some or all parts of the country.

M. L.—The cross mark still used occasionally instead of a signature did not originate in ignorance. In mediæval times, it was always appended to a signature as an attestation of good faith.

A. H. asks: "Is the Mastership of the Mint a political office?"——It is, and it isn't. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the *ex officio* Master of the Mint, and the Parliamentary representative of that department, but the executive duties are discharged by a Deputy Master, whose office has nothing whatever to do with politics.

G. G.—A certificate of birth, death or marriage, costs 3s. 7d.—1s. for the search, and 2s. 7d. for the certificate.

H. N.—The Stars and Stripes of the American flag were in all probability borrowed from the family arms of George Washington, which consisted of three stars in the upper portion and three bars across the escutcheon.

L. G. L.—Like many other people, you are confusing marriage by special license and marriage by ordinary license. It is the former that is rare, such a license being granted only in very exceptional cases, and costing nearly £50. On the other hand, an ordinary license can be obtained for about as many shillings, and is frequently used instead of marriage by banns.

CITIZEN wants to know if the Mansion House plate is private or civic property.——The plate belongs to the Mansion House, for use at banquets during successive mayoralties. For many years it has been the custom for the outgoing Lord Mayor to add to it by the presentation of a suitably engraved gold, silver-gilt, or silver "loving-cup," or other article of the kind.

A. B. C.—There are several different parts of the earth that enjoy perpetual sunshine. On the coast of Peru, for instance, where, although it may be misty sometimes, the blue sky is always visible through the whitish veil during the day. In the Sahara, when the sun is above the horizon, the high lands of Iran, various parts of Turkestan and China, and also in Australia between the southern colonies and the Gulf of Carpentaria, the sun is always to be seen.

N. S.—The reason lightning travels in a zigzag course is because it passes through different strata of air, and on being resisted in its passage, turns from side to side to find the easiest course.

GERTRUDE.—If your rubies are of the true pigeon-blood colour, they are undoubtedly of great value; in fact, a ruby of this description is, broadly speaking, worth ten times its weight in diamonds.

C. N. wants to know whether the marines should be considered as sailors or soldiers.——It would seem more natural to class them with the naval service, for although on the one hand their uniform is military, as are also their duties, especially in the infantry, yet, on the other hand, their name has to be taken into consideration and also the fact that the force is raised and paid by the Admiralty. Their duties, too, are performed mainly on board ship.

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New Premises having to be acquired by us, this Sale is held in order to Clear Out Heavy Stocks previous to the removal. NEW GOODS have to be sacrificed, together with all Regular Stocks, as it would be almost impossible to remove the Valuable and Heavy Stocks to New Premises without great risk and loss by damage to the Goods in transit, and this renders AN ABSOLUTE CLEARANCE IMPERATIVE. The magnificent opportunity is therefore afforded the readers of *Short Stories* of buying the NEW SEASON'S GOODS that are just coming in fresh from the looms at prices lower than the cost of production; and in many cases the Goods are being offered at less than HALF PRICE.

This Offer Will Not be Repeated.

ALL GOODS WARRANTED ABSOLUTELY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. Money Willingly Returned if not Approved

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 45in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.**

Lot 2.—7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. per pair, measuring 3½yd. long, by 52in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges and handsome double borders; wash easily. 3 pairs for 11s. 3d. Money returned if not approved. — **7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d.**

Lot 3.—Specially handsome Drawing-room Design, entirely new and most successful. In white or cream, with scolloped and taped edges, made from thoroughly sound cotton yarns; warranted to wear well. Sale price, 5s. 11d. per pair. Each Curtain measures 3½yd. long by 60in. wide. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 17s. Money returned if not approved. — **10s. 6d. Lace Curtains for 5s. 11d.**

Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths**, made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.
Size 34in. by 45in., price 1s. 2d. each, or 3 for 3s. 3d.
Size 56in. by 56in., price 1s. 5d. each, or 3 for 4s. 0d.
Size 62in. by 62in., price 1s. 11d. each, or 3 for 5s. 3d.
Size 68in. by 62in., price 2s. 2d. each, or 3 for 5s. 11d.

Lot 22.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned. — **10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.**

25s. Special Heavy Blankets for 14s. 9d. — Lot 23.—25s. Special Heavy Witney Yorkshire Blankets for 14s. 9d., measuring 75in. by 96in. Manufactured entirely of pure long staple wool, bleached by the sun and beautifully white. Give endless wear, and are easily washed. For perfection of finish, durability, and economy, they are unequalled. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 42s. Money returned if not approved.

WITNEY BLANKETS.

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE.

Lot 24.—800 pairs of best quality Witney Blankets, with fancy borders, very soft, warm, of great durability. Made from the best wool, and warranted to give every satisfaction. Prices given below are little more than half the original cost.

Size	Weight.	Price per Pair.	3 Pairs for
53in. by 70in.	4lb.	6s. 3d.	18s.
60in. by 80in.	6lb.	7s. 9d.	22s.
70in. by 90in.	8 lb.	11s. 6d.	33s.
75in. by 96in.	9lb.	13s. 0s.	37s.
80in. by 99in.	10 lb.	15s. 3d.	43s.
86in. by 104in.	11lb.	16s. 9d.	48s.

Lot 30.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 84in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.**

15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d. — Lot 31.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 90in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved. — **3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.**

3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d. — Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

10,000 RUGS

GIVEN AWAY.

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Lot 50.—**THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER** is made to the readers of *Short Stories* only. On receipt of Postal Order for **6s.**, or 74 stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS**, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and **large enough to cover any ordinary sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company BELOW THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained Direct from our Looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits.

GIVEN AWAY.—WITH EVERY CARPET WE SHALL ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY A VERY HANDSOME RUG TO MATCH; OR WE WILL SEND TWO CARPETS AND TWO RUGS FOR 10/6.

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED.

THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match; a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.

Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft.	in.	ft.	in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9	0 by	6	0	5/6	9/0
2	9	0 by	7	6	7/0	11/9
3	9	0 by	9	0	8/6	13/6
4	10	6 by	7	6	8/9	13/9
5	10	6 by	9	0	10/0	15/6
6	12	0 by	9	0	11/6	18/0

Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft.	in.	ft.	in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12	0 by	10	6	13/6	20/6
8	13	6 by	10	6	15/3	24/0
9	12	0 by	12	0	15/3	24/0
10	13	6 by	12	0	17/0	27/0
11	15	0 by	12	0	19/0	32/0
12	18	0 by	12	0	22/9	36/0

These Carpets are splendid imitations of real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. All designs are registered, and deservedly considered works of art. We can confidently recommend them for use in the dining and drawing rooms, or any rooms and landings where hard wear is a necessity.

GIVEN AWAY.

As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories* we have decided to give away to every purchaser a very handsomely-woven Hearthrug, 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, to match carpets in colours, etc.

THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

DEAR SIR,— 9 Bedford Row, High Wycombe, Bucks.

I have seen some of the Carpets and rugs sent by your firm, and think they are really a marvel. Please forward goods as follows, etc.—Yours faithfully, Rev. F. H. MAY.

"SHORT STORIES" COUPON.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. for amount we guarantee to send any goods as above.
THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY WILLINGLY REFUNDED.

All Orders despatched same day as received. Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, and crossed UNION BANK. ADDRESS:

THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING COMPANY, Sale Dept., 31 OLD STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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A DELIGHTFUL APPETIZER

NO BREAKFAST OR TEA TABLE COMPLETE WITHOUT IT

MARMALADE

Unrivalled piquant stimulant for the delicate.

PREPARED BY JAMES ROBERTSON Paisley.

FREE SAMPLE ON RECEIPT OF 2D FOR POSTAGE.

NUCOLINE

A PURE VEGETABLE BUTTER.

FOR BAKED & BOILED PASTRY, FRYING, etc.

A PERFECT COOKING BUTTER.

NUTRITIVE, DIGESTIVE, ECONOMICAL. FIVE PRIZE MEDALS AWARDED.

Stocked by all London Stores, etc.

A SAMPLE TIN SENT POST FREE FOR THREE STAMPS. Write

NUCOLINE LTD., SILVERTOWN, LONDON, E.

LYLE'S GOLDEN SYRUP

LONGEST ESTABLISHED, PUREST & BEST.

PURE WHOLESOME FOOD.

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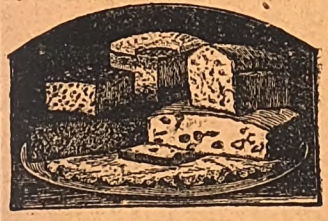

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RECKITT'S BLUE.

ASK FOR IT AND SEE THAT YOU GET IT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 479. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

BEECHAM'S PASTIME PARCEL!

THE PRIZE COMPETITION FOR £100.

All competitors are now informed that the correct solutions of the "Oracles" were as follows

A.....	Burnt Mill.	C.....	Sparkford.	E.....	Lightship.
B.....	Ash Green.	D.....	Fire-eater.	F.....	The Lost Chord.

Six Competitors only were successful in giving the proper answer to each of the six puzzles, and the £100 has been equally divided, a cheque for **£16 13s. 4d.** being sent to each on February 11th.

The names and addresses of the fortunate six are: Miss Beatrice A. Plummer, 14 Calverley Park, Tunbridge Wells; Miss Edith May Adams, Fernleigh, Heeley Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham; Mrs. F. E. Bickerton, 101, Evershot Road, Tollington Park, London, N.; Mr. Thomas Shepherd, 9 Hall Street, Spring Bank, Hull; Mr. W. Lonnon, 9 Queensgate Terrace, Freedom, Plymouth; Sergeant James Cochrane, 2nd Battalion Cameron Highlanders, Fort George, N.B.

Readers of this paper who did not send for a Beecham's Pastime Parcel, but who may now be curious to see what this unique Competition really was, can obtain a parcel, which is, irrespective of the Competition, big value for **ONE SHILLING**, by enclosing P.O. or stamps for this amount to

THE PROPRIETOR OF BEECHAM'S PILLS, ST. HELENS, LANCASHIRE.

***NOTE.*—To those few correspondents who sent for BEECHAM'S PASTIME PARCELS, and have for some reason or other not received them, in some cases either the name or postal address has been omitted, PLEASE WRITE AGAIN.**

BEECHAM'S PILLS

For all Bilious and Nervous Disorders, such as

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver and Female Ailments.

Prepared only by the Proprietor, THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere, in Boxes, **1/1½** & **2/9** each, with full Directions.

THE 1s. 1½d. BOX CONTAINS FIFTY-SIX PILLS.

The Sale now EXCEEDS SIX MILLION BOXES per Annum.

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"Its food value is double that of Bread made from ordinary wheaten flour."—Lancet.

HOVIS BREAD

will not only help to improve your digestion and consequently your health, but will also bring back that energetic and happy feeling of good health. Man does not live a natural life, so a good portion of a natural food, in the shape of HOVIS, at each meal will largely counteract the bad influence that modern life has upon the health and digestive organs. This is not an idle remark, but a proved statement, daily being verified.

HOVIS is baked and sold by all good class Bakers. No loaf genuine unless stamped HOVIS. 6d. and 1/- samples of Bread and Biscuits sent on receipt of stamps by

S. FITTON & SON, Millers, Macclesfield.

MAKE FRUIT WINES AT HOME.

Ask for MASON'S.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. THE VERY BEST.

MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE.

A Sixpenny Bottle will, in six minutes, make sixty glasses of Delicious, Non-Alcoholic Wine. Agents Wanted.

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger Lemon, Orange, Blackberry etc.

YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

The Best Hair Dye

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d. 5s. 6d. & 10s. 6d.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Illd. Guide (250 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000 Tobacconists Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

A sum of from 10/- to 20/- per week offered for spare time to either sex everywhere. Work can be done evenings. Send addressed envelope to Box 60, Eclipse Works, 89, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

39/-

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 183B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Road, N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

NOSE

A RADICAL PERMANENT CURE Medically approved for Red Noses, 3/9, post free, under cover. Pamphlet, "Red Noses, Cause and Prevention," 1/-; Machines for Ugly Noses, particulars for stamp. LEES RAY. Specialist. Wavertree, Liverpool.

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Plays Hymns, Popular Airs, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Hornpipes, &c. A mere child can play it. Cash or easy payments. List of tunes and full particulars free.

DRAPER, ORGANETTE WORKS, BLACKBURN.

SILVER QUEEN CYCLES!

Best Value on Earth. Immense stock of Ladies' and Gents' machines. New and Secondhand. Wonderful bargains. Carriage paid. Easy payments from 10s. monthly, or large cash discount. 1 year's guarantee Illus. price lists post free on application. Old cycles exchanged The SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

WADE'S WONDERFUL OFFER

A SOLID SILVER WATCH GIVEN AWAY.

SEND NO MONEY.

In order to introduce my name into every household in the Kingdom, I undertake and guarantee to give away one of my "World-Famed £2 Silver Watches," list price, Ladies' or Gentlemen's, to every reader who sends me the correct reading of the Rebus printed below. I am preparing to send out immediately 2,000 of these watches. This is a perfectly genuine competition, and the only thing you have to do is carry out the conditions, and if you succeed in guessing correctly you have the advantage of our truly wonderful offer.

These pictures represent three well-known English Wild Flowers. The conditions of the Competition are that you find out what these flowers are, and if you are correct you undertake to purchase one of my inexpensive Solid Silver Chains. These chains are the best made, are marvellous value. Money returned if dissatisfied. Send at once, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope, so that I may inform you if correct.

W. W. WADE,

WATCH MANUFACTURER,

Dept. 35, GOLD EXCHANGE,

Hammersmith, London, W.

DR. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL SOAP.

Prepared with Arsenic, Zinc, and other Ingredients.

Deliciously and expensively perfumed, the most luxurious Soap in the World. Produces a most lovely complexion, eradicates spots, pimples, and all imperfections, makes the skin exquisitely clear, and produces the healthy bloom so much desired. It is absolutely harmless, and each tablet is accompanied by a medical certificate.

6D. & 1S. PER TABLET.

This Soap prevents the growth of superfluous hairs, removes wrinkles, feeds the skin. You can get it at all the Stores and first-class Chemists. *The Family Doctor* says it is the most economical beautifier known to Modern Dermatology. It clears away all pimples, spots, redness, or roughness, makes the skin smooth and clear as a baby's, and cures shiny and greasy skins. Use it in the bath and for all Toilet purposes; it is most delicious. For irritable or sensitive skins it is matchless and delightfully soothing.

MADAME PATTI sends her best thanks for Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap, which she finds most excellent—Craigy-nos Castle, South Wales.

USE ALSO DR. MACKENZIE'S FACE LOTION.

Beware of many Imitations. Have Dr. MACKENZIE'S or none.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 479.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending March 5th, 1898.

THE POST-MORTEM AUTOPSY.

I was always very fond of him, poor fellow! Philip was one of those gentle, sympathetic, almost feminine natures, that appealed to the feelings of an elderly and childless woman like myself by their very feebleness. It was well that he was not left to make his way in the world.

Old James Forrester, his father, left him a comfortable income, with the principal strictly tied up, so that he could not make away with it. He ought to have led a fairly comfortable life of it, with his artistic tastes, pleasant manners, and agreeable exterior. He was always popular, and had hosts of friends, until a bitter love disappointment rendered him morbid and misanthropic.

It was cruel of Beatrice Raymond to treat him as she did. Not that I blame her for not marrying him. A man with hereditary consumption in the background as an inheritance to bestow upon his children, is not fitted to enter into the bonds of matrimony with any woman, and I am the last one to blame any woman for maintaining that opinion. Only she ought not to have

Edited By G. Arthur Pearson.

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lured him on to love her. She was beautiful, brilliant, and fascinating, and she certainly flirted with him desperately, in a way that probably would have only proved pleasant pastime to a good many men. But to Philip it did serious harm. He never was the same man afterwards.

I shall never forget the day that he came to see me and told me the whole story. I was always like an old maiden aunt to him, for he had no mother—my poor Philip!—and so he made me his confidante in all important matters.

"And what do you mean to do now, Philip?" I asked him, after he had told me the whole story of his wooing Miss Raymond, and of the positive way in which she had refused him.

"I do not know, Miss Anson," he answered in a dreary way. "Sometimes I think of going to Paris to study art."

"The very best thing you could do!" I answered briskly, interrupting him mercilessly.

"But to what end? My life is a desolate one. I have no incentive to work."

"Work for work's sake—for art's sake, my boy. You are still so young," he was then just twenty-eight, "that you may shape for yourself a very noble career."

"What! with my fragile health—my shattered hopes? It is not very likely."

"Try—only try."

And I had at least the satisfaction of seeing a gleam of reviving interest in life shining in his eyes before he left me.

He did go on to the Continent, and took up the study of art, but he lacked strength of character and steadiness of purpose to enable him to achieve any distinction as a painter.

He lacked, too, the spur of necessity. His daily bread was not depending upon his efforts, so he relaxed those efforts whenever he felt ill or depressed.

He studied awhile in Paris, and then he went to Munich. Finally I heard of him in Rome, always doing something with his pencils and palette, but nothing that ever amounted to much. He went on several long journeys, and a tour that he took through Austria and Hungary seemed to interest him very much.

He wrote to me regularly, but he had not the gift of penning very interesting letters, so that he gave me merely a list of the places he visited, and added but little concerning himself and his own impressions and occupations.

After a year or two his letter slackened, and at last they ceased entirely. Sometimes I would meet persons who had seen him abroad, and the accounts they gave of him were far from satisfactory. He had grown more morbid and cynical than ever, and, moreover, his health was in a most precarious condition. He had caught a series of severe colds during his Austrian journey, and, though partially restored by a new course of treatment prescribed by a young and highly-gifted Hungarian physician, there was no doubt but that his lungs were seriously affected.

"He talks now," said my informant, "of going to the United States, and of settling down next winter in Florida to give his new doctor's system a full and patient trial. He has, too, an idea of painting some pictures of negro life, and from what he said I think he has an idea of combining the two; that is, of taking a studio somewhere, and of working and trying the new remedies at one and the same time."

"Do you know anything about this new course of treatment?" I asked.

"Nothing—except that it consists in gradually increasing doses of some virulent poison. This much I got Forrester to tell me; but he is a reserved, unsociable fellow, and does not care to talk much about himself or his ailments."

Reserved—unsociable! How he had changed. Alas! my poor Philip!

It was only a few weeks later that I was astonished by the arrival of Philip himself at my little home.

"Only to say 'How are you?' and then 'Good-bye,' Miss Anson," he declared. "I could not pass through London without coming to take a look at you. I start for New Orleans to-morrow." And then he sat down and talked for more than an hour concerning his plans for the future.

I found him terribly changed, with all the signs of advanced consumption visible in his countenance, and in his wasted form. But he spoke cheerfully respecting his own health, and also expressed the utmost faith in the new cure invented and prescribed by his Hungarian physician.

On that subject, however, he seemed unwilling to talk, and soon diverged into an account of his plans for the coming winter, and of his projected picture. I had never seen him so eager and so interested in anything relating to himself since his love affair with Miss Raymond, and I feel encouraged respecting him, despite the unsatisfactory condition of his health.

He took a very affectionate farewell of me, and went away; and the next tidings I had of him came in the shape of a letter that he addressed to me from New Orleans.

He wrote hopefully, and in good spirits. He had found just the residence that he required, namely, a furnished villa in the suburbs of the city. He had also found a most admirable model for his projected picture in the shape of an old negress who kept a fruit stall in the square, opposite the cathedral.

"She is the most curious and picturesque old creature imaginable," he wrote. "There is a tradition current among the coloured people here that she is over a hundred years old, and certainly she looks it. She is a native-born African, and claims to have been a priestess, or a princess, or a witch, in her own land—perhaps all three.

"Old Yana, as she is called, might pose for a picture of 'She,' after that bewitching heroine's death, with all her thousands of years of life accumulated on her head. Her face shows the most extraordinary agglomeration possible of wrinkles, and her short, curly wool is as white as snow. I have engaged this venerable personage to act as my cook and housekeeper and general factotum, and she will sit to me in her hours of leisure. So you may expect me back in the spring, and a picture that shall be a masterpiece, if a remarkable model and painstaking execution can make it so.

"As to my health, I find that it is rapidly improving. I will venture now to confess to you what the nature really was of the treatment that I have been following. It consisted of minute doses of arsenic, to be gradually increased as my system became capable of enduring larger quantities of the poison. I have derived the utmost benefit from it, especially in the matter of relief from oppression of breathing. My respiration has of

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late become so easy and comfortable that it is a positive pleasure to me to breathe."

I received two short letters from him after that, in one of which he enclosed a photograph of the old negress, Yana. I did not like the face that looked up sullenly and scowlingly from the picture. It was the face, so it seemed to me, of a being with unlimited possibilities of cruelty in her nature, and with an element of barbarism underlying the thin veneer of civilisation acquired by long residence in a Christian land.

As I looked upon the wrinkled features, there rose involuntarily before me memories of Ashantee kings and their dreadful "customs," and all sorts of horrid deeds perpetrated by the savage tribes of Africa. Yet I was far enough from suspecting the truth.

I scarcely know how to conclude my story. What remains for me to tell is so inconceivably horrible that I dread to record the incidents as they actually occurred.

Towards the end of January I received a letter from Philip, begging me to come to New Orleans and pay him a visit. He wrote in great depression of spirits. The arsenic treatment seemed to have reached a point with him when to stop it would prove fatal, and when unmistakable symptoms showed that his system had nearly reached a point when no more doses of the poison could be endured.

"Moreover," he wrote, "I think that old Yana is growing dissatisfied with her position with me. She has become sulky of late, and refuses to speak; and sometimes I can see her glaring at me out of those bloodshot eyes of hers, with a ferocious expression that actually chills the blood in my veins. I may be growing fanciful, however. I am ill and lonely, and long to see you, dear Miss Anson. Do come and spend a few weeks with me, and then I will return with you to London. Cable me word if you will come, and also the day of your arrival, and I will meet you in New York."

I decided at once to accept the invitation, and to go and look after the poor fellow in his evil plight. I sent the dispatch as he had directed before I started. But when my long, tiresome journey was at an end, and I at length reached New Orleans, there was no one waiting to meet me at the station; Philip was nowhere to be seen.

Fearing that he was ill I hired a carriage, and was on the point of starting at once for his abode, when it occurred to me that the presence of a physician might be useful in case Philip had suddenly become worse. So I appealed to a young man, Dr. James Lake, who had been a fellow passenger, and who had shown me a good deal of kindness on the way. After hearing my explanation of the circumstances he willingly agreed to accompany me.

We set out without delay, and reached the villa in safety. But, to my astonishment, it seemed utterly deserted. We knocked and rang at the front door for some time in vain. Then Dr. Lake, who was an active and energetic young fellow, proposed trying to gain an entrance by one of the back windows. He went away, and in a very few minutes he unlocked and unbarred the front door from within. But as I was about to enter he waved me back.

"Do not come in, Miss Anson," he whispered, in a hoarse, horror-stricken tone. "Something frightful has been taking place here. Let me search the house thoroughly before you try to enter."

His fresh, young face was white with a ghastly pallor. Hastily scribbling a few lines on a card, he summoned our driver, and sent him off at full gallop to the city with a message of which I caught only one word—"police." Then he went in, and throwing open the windows of the drawing-room, he beckoned to me, after a brief investigation, to enter.

There was nothing at all astonishing to be seen in the room. Philip had evidently used it as a studio. The table was strewn with brushes and colour tubes, and his palette lay conspicuous in the midst.

On an easel was placed the finished picture about which he had so often written to me. It was a full-length figure of the old negress, about half the size of life, and represented her as seated beside her stand of oranges.

It was painted with a breadth and freedom of touch, and a subtle sense of colour, of which I could hardly believe Philip Forrester capable. Sketches and studies, mostly of the same grim personage, leant against the walls or were piled upon the chairs. But Philip—where was he?

I was on the point of leaving the room to go in search of him, when Dr. Lake, who had quitted me abruptly on my entrance, returned, bearing something in his hands, over which he had thrown a large handkerchief. He laid his burden on the table. A faint, horrible odour stole through the room.

"You are a brave woman—a strong woman, Miss Ansom," he said impressively. "Can you stand a terrible shock?"

"I can—I will."

"Then tell me if you recognise these features," he said.

He drew aside the handkerchief, and there before me lay a ghastly severed human head. I shrieked in terror at the sight.

"Compose yourself, Miss Anson. Look again, and tell me if you know who this is."

I forced myself to fix my shuddering gaze on the dreadful object before me. Yes, I knew but too well the livid countenance on which I looked. It was that of Philip Forrester.

"But who has done this deed?" I cried. "Where is the negress Yana?"

"She, too, is dead. Her body is lying on the floor in the kitchen. This," and he touched the poor head as he spoke, "I found hidden behind a pile of wood in the out-house."

It was not till the inquest was held that the riddle of this mystery was fully unravelled. I will not dwell upon the hideous details of the evidence. Suffice it to say that Dr. Lake's medical science enabled him to discover the truth.

Old Yana had undoubtedly belonged in her youth to one of the cannibal tribes of Africa; and, indeed, the testimony was elicited at the trial that she had been in the habit of dilating on her delight in the feasts of human flesh, of which she had partaken as a girl. She had slain her unfortunate master, probably in a sudden and frenzied revival of her old instincts.

Dr. Lake discovered the traces of more than one horrible banquet in which she had indulged after her crime. But that crime had brought with it its own swift and singular punishment. The flesh of the arsenic eater, saturated as it was with the deadly drug, was in itself a poison, and the old cannibal had perished from its effects.

L. H. H.

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The Seven Years' League.

"You don't look a day older, Tina."

"And you haven't changed a bit, Claire. Of course I have changed considerably. If I hadn't, why should I have come all these miles to keep our seven years' compact?"

"But you look just the same. You are as pretty as ever. Nobody in the world would take you for twenty-three. Are you sure now, Tina, quite sure that you aren't as good as engaged? You remember we promised to tell each other just as soon as we became interested in a man."

"Well, dear, you begin, then."

"*I* begin? Why, Christine Markham, who said that I was interested in any man?"

"Nobody yet, but I want you to say it. You don't suppose I'm going to do all the confessing, do you?"

"I don't see why I should be the first. You're the elder." Claire flushed a little as she leant forward in her impulsive way and kissed her friend. They had met this morning for the first time in seven years. They had parted last at school, and had agreed to meet seven years from that time. It was an idea of Christine's.

"You know we are said to be a different person physically every seven years," she said.

Christine was a country girl. Claire lived in London, but in spite of the distance between their homes, they had confidently expected to see each other now and then during the interval. But Claire had gone abroad some time after leaving school, and meantime, the correspondence between the two began to flag. Each had her own interests, growing out of her immediate environments, which it was natural should overshadow an intimacy which, in the nature of things, was now but a memory. But as the date for the reunion drew near, each recalled it, and two letters in reference to the event crossed each other. Then the correspondence became brisk, till it was settled that Christine should come to London and visit her friend. And now they had been together just two hours.

"But I'm only a year older, Claire," was Christine's reply to the other's final remark. "And besides, I can see that you have something to tell. Now begin."

Christine's eyes were fastened intently upon her companion's face. She had noted the flush when it first made its appearance. She felt that it betokened something, and hers was a romantic nature, else probably she would not have thought of this seven years' reunion. She was determined now that her friend should make a confidant of her.

"But if one hasn't anything to tell, how can one begin?" Claire had dropped Christine's hand, and was twisting her handkerchief between her fingers nervously. "I'm younger than you. It's more natural that you should have an—affair than that I should. Tell me all about it, Tina, dear, won't you?"

Christine suddenly leant forward, and took her friend in her arms. Pressing her cheek close against that of Claire, she whispered: "Ah, you sly puss—you little diplomatist! You think that I will tell you my secret for the pleasure of hearing yours. Well, I will. Is it a bargain? Come, on the sacred honour of the seven years' league."

Christine straightened herself, and with a solemn expression held one hand raised, pointing to the ceiling.

"Ah, Tina, Tina, are you really in love with someone?"

Claire put her two hands together, and sat looking at her companion with a rapturous expression.

"Swear first," responded the other with mock seriousness. "You will tell me your experience if I tell you mine?"

"Ah, Tina, how ridiculous you are! I said there wasn't anything for me to tell."

Down came Christine's hand into her lap.

"Then, of course, there can be no exchange," she said decisively.

Claire looked disappointed, hurt almost.

"But that isn't fair, Tina," she exclaimed, putting an arm round her friend's waist. "It—isn't my fault I haven't any story to tell."

"Ah, then, is it his?" broke in the other quickly. "Come now, Claire, if I tell you my little romance, there is no reason why you shouldn't return the compliment. You see you can't deceive me. I know you have one. Now then, is it a bargain?"

"Well, if you won't call it a romance, but just want me to say a word or two about—about the way a certain person impresses me, I'll agree. Now, tell me your experience. What is he like?"

Claire had hung her head, and moved her foot uneasily backwards and forwards across the carpet during the first part of this speech. Now she arranged herself more comfortably on the divan, took one of Christine's

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hands to hold in hers during the recital, and prepared to listen.

"Oh, he is tall, and—well, he is neither dark nor fair, but very handsome. I am sure you would think so, too, Claire, if you were to see him. And so smart."

"Where was it that you met him?" Claire went on.

"It was at a dance——"

"But about the man. What did he do? What did you say? Do you write to each other, and when do you expect to see him again? You're not engaged, are you?"

"Oh, dear me, no! I haven't seen him now for—for several weeks."

"And he likes you, does he? But of course he does, or you wouldn't be telling me anything about it."

"Well, he hasn't told me so yet," rejoined Christine. "But now it is your turn, Claire. I'm just dying to hear of your Romeo."

"No, indeed, it isn't my turn yet. There's lots you must tell me first. You—you haven't a photograph of him with you, have you?"

"Why, Claire, of course not."

"Then describe him more minutely. You say he is tall, and neither fair nor dark. What colour is his hair?"

"Brown, a sort of chestnut, you know."

"And does he wear a moustache or a beard?"

"Just a moustache. Don't you remember we used to say we'd never have a lover unless he wore a moustache?"

"Oh, yes; and this is the ideal one. Well, how old is he?"

"About twenty-six or twenty-eight. Of course, I don't know about that for certain."

"And is he rich?"

"He's pretty well off. Naturally he wouldn't be the ideal lover if he wasn't."

"What business is he in?" Claire went on.

Christine did not answer immediately. She sat looking straight at Claire, who was now holding both her friend's hands and gazing at her in a sort of rapt daze. Finally she said: "Business? Oh, yes, he's a lawyer."

"A lawyer?" Claire repeated the words. She drew her hands away with a sudden movement, then looked confused and got up and crossed the room to pull the blind down a few inches, although the sun had not yet begun to send its rays under it.

"Yes. You haven't forgotten that day we counted the buttons on my ulster and it came out 'lawyer' for me? What was it for you, Claire?"

"I—I cannot remember, Tina, it was so long ago. But what is the lawyer's name?" Claire had picked up a fan from the centre table. She held this now so as partially to screen her face as she put the question.

"Haven't I told you enough yet, Claire? Remember every question that I have answered you must answer for me."

"Yes, yes, Tina. But his name, tell me that."

Claire seemed strangely excited. She tapped the fan impatiently against her teeth. Her eyes were dilated; the flush on her cheeks was spreading to her temples, where it seemed to turn to moisture that stood out in little beads unheeded.

"All right, then, my dear. But a name for a name, remember that. Here it is—one that has always been my favourite, though—plain, simple John."

Claire gave a sort of gasp behind the fan. She put out one hand as though to clutch Christine, then drew it quickly back again. Her eyes closed, her body swayed from side to side, and then her friend sprang up and put both arms about her.

"Claire, Claire!" she cried. "What is the matter?"

She placed her gently down on the divan. Then she turned quickly to the dressing-table, looking for some restoratives. She picked up a vinaigrette, and after applying it, had the satisfaction of seeing Claire open her eyes.

"My dear girl, what is it?" whispered Christine, bending over her. "Your hand is as cold as ice. Do you feel faint. Shall I call your mother?"

Claire turned and grasped the other's arm almost fiercely.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "Say nothing about it to anyone. It is nothing. I am all right now." She raised herself to a sitting position. "Now tell me where you would like me to take you this afternoon. Shall we go for a drive, or would you prefer a *matinée*?"

Christine made no reply for the moment. She stood there by the divan looking down upon her friend earnestly, solemnly.

"Claire," she said suddenly, "you must tell me what is the matter with you. It is something that I said; something about that man."

"Don't, oh, Tina, don't!" Claire raised her hands as if to ward off a blow.

"Yes, I will, I must," the other went on. "I have been wicked, brutal, but I didn't know, truly, Claire, I didn't know. It is only a coincidence. It all came of my love of romance."

"Don't speak of it again, Tina. If you do I—" Claire had raised her voice, but it suddenly failed her, and she dropped weakly back among the cushions, covering her face with her hands.

"I must speak of it, Claire. You are all wrong. You have believed every word I said, and there is not one of them true. It is like Marjory Daw. You have read that, Claire? There wasn't any Marjory, you know."

"Well?" Claire had taken her hands from her face. She was looking up at her friend's lips as if her very life hung on the words that should next issue from them.

"I never met any such man as I have just described. I made it all up out of the ideal we had had at school, just to get you to tell me your story."

"And you never knew a lawyer whose first name is John, and who has brown hair?"

"No, dear. I couldn't possibly have told you his last name. It was very wrong of me, and to show you how penitent I am I shall not ask you to tell me your story. Not now, at any rate. Do you forgive me, Claire?"

The other's answer was to reach up, draw her friend's face down to hers, and in this attitude to weep a few tears, in which all that there was of sorrow was not for herself, but for Christine, who did not know her joy.

A. L. W.

SIX MORE BURGLARY CLAIMS PAID BY PEARSON'S.

There seems to have been an epidemic of burglaries within the last few weeks. No fewer than six separate claims have recently been paid under the Burglary Insurance scheme in connection with Pearson's Weekly.

Particulars of the scheme appear in the current issue.

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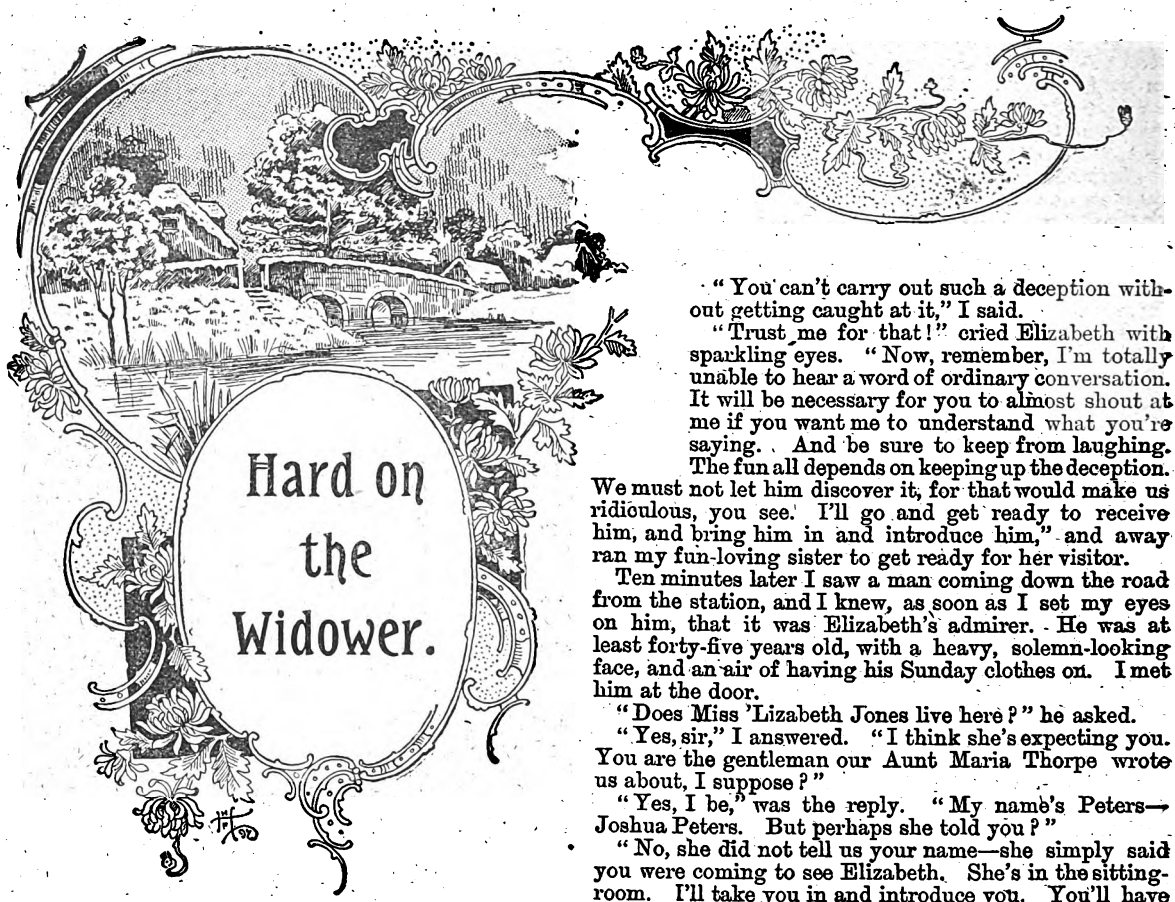

Hard on the Widower.

"You can't guess what's going to happen," cried my sister Elizabeth one morning as she came running up the path from the gate, where she had been to meet the postman. She had an open letter in her hand.

"Has someone left you a fortune?" I asked.

"Oh, better than that!" was the reply. "I'm going to have a beau. Listen," and she proceeded to read the letter:

DEAR ELIZABETH,—I write to tell you that a friend of mine has fallen in love with your photograph. He is a widower and on the look-out for another wife. He happened to see your photo, and it won his susceptible heart at once. He asked all kinds of questions about you, and when he found out that you were "fancy free," he said he "had a good mind to come an' see you. Perhaps there was the chance he'd been lookin' for." I advised him to come. "You can tell by trying," I said, and he's coming. He will be there on Wednesday. Be kind to the poor man, and—send me an invitation to the wedding. Hastily,

AUNT MARIA.

"That's just like Aunt Maria, isn't it?" cried Elizabeth, half amused and half indignant. "She's bound to have fun at somebody's expense."

"To-day is Wednesday, Elizabeth," I said with a smile. "You can look for your admirer by the next train. The letter ought to have got here yesterday, you see, by its date."

"I'm thoroughly out of patience with Aunt Maria," said Elizabeth. "I know what I'll do. I'll pretend I'm deaf, and I'll have some fun out of it as well as Aunt Maria."

"You can't carry out such a deception without getting caught at it," I said.

"Trust me for that!" cried Elizabeth with sparkling eyes. "Now, remember, I'm totally unable to hear a word of ordinary conversation. It will be necessary for you to almost shout at me if you want me to understand what you're saying. And be sure to keep from laughing. The fun all depends on keeping up the deception. We must not let him discover it, for that would make us ridiculous, you see. I'll go and get ready to receive him, and bring him in and introduce him," and away ran my fun-loving sister to get ready for her visitor.

Ten minutes later I saw a man coming down the road from the station, and I knew, as soon as I set my eyes on him, that it was Elizabeth's admirer. He was at least forty-five years old, with a heavy, solemn-looking face, and an air of having his Sunday clothes on. I met him at the door.

"Does Miss 'Lizabeth Jones live here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I answered. "I think she's expecting you. You are the gentleman our Aunt Maria Thorpe wrote us about, I suppose?"

"Yes, I be," was the reply. "My name's Peters—Joshua Peters. But perhaps she told you?"

"No, she did not tell us your name—she simply said you were coming to see Elizabeth. She's in the sitting-room. I'll take you in and introduce you. You'll have to speak rather loud, for Elizabeth's just a trifle hard of hearing."

"That's bad," said Mr. Peters, pulling out a big red handkerchief and wiping his perspiring face. "Awfully warm, ain't it?"

"Quite warm," I responded.

By that time we were at the sitting-room door. Elizabeth sat by the window with her back towards us.

"Elizabeth," I said, raising my voice. No reply.

"She must be dretful deaf not to hear that," said Mr. Peters. "How long's she been so?"

I did not dare trust myself to reply. I went up to Elizabeth and put my hand on her shoulder. She turned and saw us.

"Why didn't you speak when you came in?" she asked, rising.

"She did—she hollered," said Mr. Peters, in a sort of stage aside.

"Elizabeth, this is Mr. Peters, the gentleman Aunt Maria wrote about," I said, close to her ear.

"Oh, yes, I understand," said Elizabeth, her face showing great delight and interest. "I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Peasley. Sit down, please. I hope you're well, Mr. Peasley."

"Peters, not Peasley," corrected her visitor.

"A little louder, please. I didn't quite catch what you said," and Elizabeth bent her head to listen.

"I said my name wasn't Peasley," shouted the other. "It's Peters."

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"Oh, yes, I understand now," responded Elizabeth. "I'm not so very deaf, still one has to talk rather loud for me to understand all they say."

"Your Aunt M'riar told me about you," said Mr. Peters, sitting down. "I've knowed her quite a long time."

"Aunt Maria dying? You must be mistaken, Mr. Peters. She didn't say anything about it in her letter."

"I said I'd knowed her quite a long time," said Mr. Peters, in a voice like a trumpet.

"Oh, yes; pardon me," said Elizabeth. "When you speak a trifle louder than usual, like that, I have no difficulty in understanding what you say."

"She must be awful deaf if she calls that a trifle louder than usual," said Mr. Peters.

I couldn't have kept my face straight much longer, so I busied myself about getting dinner, but I could hear every word of the conversation in the kitchen. Elizabeth kept him repeating his remarks until I fancied he was getting hoarse.

"I've always fancied I should like living on a farm," said Elizabeth. "Do you think the children would take kindly to a stepmother, Mr. Peters?"

"They'd have to, if I got married again," was his reply. "No trouble about that."

"No. I don't like cats," said Elizabeth. "I'd prefer a dog. Do you keep a dog, Mr. Peters?"

"You didn't catch my remark," he shouted.

"I think just as you do about that," responded Elizabeth. "I don't like to hear them bark. We seem to have quite a similarity of tastes, don't we, Mr. Peters?"

Presently dinner was ready, and they came out together and sat down to the meal. I told Elizabeth that I would wait on them. I knew I could never undergo the ordeal of sitting at table with them.

"I hope you like moonlight walks and boating, Mr. Peters? I do, so much!"

"Well, I can't say as I do," responded Mr. Peters. "Bein' out at night, 'specially on the water, don't agree with me. It makes me roomatick."

"Romantic? There it is again!" cried Elizabeth in delight. "I'm so glad you are, for I'm the most romantic girl you ever saw."

"I didn't say romantic," corrected Mr. Peters in a tone that made the dishes dance; "I said roomatick."

"Oh, pardon me," said Elizabeth; "but occasionally you seem to forget that I am a trifle deaf, and speak so low. But you'd get used to it in time."

"I don't b'leeve I ever would," said Mr. Peters to me. "Don't you s'pose somethin' could be done for her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I replied, turning away to hide my face.

All that afternoon my wicked sister kept that poor man shouting at her. By degrees he got hoarser and hoarser. Just before tea was ready he came into the kitchen where I was at work.

"I'm done up; my throat feels rougher 'n a grater. It's harder work to carry on a conversation with her than it is to drive a donkey. It's a pity she can't have somethin' done for her ears. She's smart and good-lookin', an' she seems to take a great likin' to me."

"You'd better talk with her about it," I suggested.

"I can't," said Mr. Peters. "I'm too tired. I think she gets worse to'ards night, for it's harder work to make her understand now than it was in the morning. I'll be goin' now. You can talk with her, an' if she is willin' to have her ears doctored, and it does any good, I'll come down ag'in. I don't see why your aunt didn't tell me about it. But, perhaps, she was afraid your sister'd lose the chance if she let on aforehand."

"I've enjoyed your visit so much, dear Mr. Peters," said Elizabeth, at parting. "Come again, won't you now, and soon?"

"That depends," shouted the poor man. "Your sister'll tell you what I've been sayin' to her, when I'm gone."

"Oh, yes, yes! I shall think of you when you're gone," said Elizabeth. "You'll write, won't you?"

"I'll see," said Mr. Peters.

When the gate closed behind poor Mr. Peters I sat down and laughed till I cried.

"Oh, Jane!" cried Elizabeth, dropping down on the floor, "I never had such fun in all my life; never! He shouted at me till the sound of his voice roared in my ears like thunder. I wouldn't wonder if it really made me deaf. Poor man! It's a great pity for me to lose such a chance."

And then Elizabeth and I laughed and cried together.

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T. E. Smith, 28 Ash Street, Bootle, Liverpool. "A Teacher's Bible." 10s. 6d.

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By M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to meet the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), results in the destruction of the Allied fleet.

CHAPTER IX.

John Hardy Gives an Order.

John Hardy in a dead faint on Brighton sands—John Hardy waking next morning on a down bed in Cavendish Square—the transition is rapid, but that is what, in fact, occurred.

Captain MacLeod, though gashed all over the chest, woke to consciousness hours before John. John had his wound *inside* his chest in the shape of phthisis, and gave frequent signs of it in the form of those pathetic clandestine coughs which came from him. The swim through the water had nearly done for John; and he woke next morning with a chest contracted and wheezing with asthma. Besides this, he had a scratch on his brow where a shell-splinter had cut him.

No. 11a Cavendish Square had been the town-residence of John Hardy's race for some generations, and here, in solitary state, the young man lived when in London.

London, lately, had seen a good deal of him, though formerly he had always buried himself in the country when, as rarely happened, he was on shore. This newly-developed attractiveness of London was concentrated for John in a certain mansion in Park Lane.

When he opened his eyes, torn by a cough, they met two others bending low over him—old ones, surrounded by wrinkles; anxious ones, full of solicitude. It was half-past eleven o'clock.

"Well, Bobbie," said John with a smile, and stretched a little.

"I am pleased to see you so much yourself, I am sure, Master John," said Bobbie; "how are you feeling now?"

"I, Bobs? Much the same as usual, I suppose. Where on earth am I?"

"You are in Cavendish Square, sir—in your own chamber."

"Oh, aye—I see that. I remember now, Bobbie. The battle, eh? and the swim, eh? The old *Jupiter* did not do so badly, after all. Did any of the enemy escape? And Captain MacLeod—how is he, Bobbie?"

"He is said to be doing fairly well, Master John. He has a wound in his chest, which is not serious. He is better off than you, I am thinking. It was he who brought you here, sir."

"When?"

"About four in the morning, sir."

"Ah, I fancy I recollect something of it. Well, that's all right then, Bobbie."

"Ah, Master John, not all right, perhaps! When, when, sir, will you learn to take care of that chest, sir?"

"Oh, bother the chest, Bobs boy. A fellow has got to do his duty, I suppose, Bobbie?"

John Hardy's eyelids lifted as he said this, and he turned upward the pure cerulean azure of his eyes in clear open query upon old "Bobbie," the aged butler of his father and grandfather.

"Well, sir—well—if you put it in that way, of course. But still, there is this to be said: it was not, so to speak, your *duty* to go through this; you had not, as one might say, any right to be there——"

"No, Bobbie, but I *was* there, you see. And being there, it was only natural that one should do what little one could for the old country, don't you think——?"

"What *little*, sir?" cried Bobbie. "Ah, that is like your way of speaking, sir—like your father before you, Master John! This is a proud day for poor old Bobbie, Master John—forgive me for these tears, sir, the tears come quickly when we are old, Master John—a proud day, and the tip-top hour in the life of your father's old servant, Master

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John, making dying easy to him from this day onwards, sir. It was what I predicted of you, and to-day you have made true your old Bobbie's word before all the world, Master John. England this morning is ringing, sir, with the name of Hardy, aye, and France, too, sir, and Europe and America, and the servants down at the Hall have sent a telegram to poor old Bobbie, sir, all of them in a body, congratulating me on the man you have shown yourself, and it's a proud day, sir—a proud day—for poor old Robert Mason, Master John, is this that you have brought me—— "

Robert's flow of words was choked by sobs. John put out his hand, drew him nearer to the bedside, and laid one arm round the stringy old neck, the boy's soft, affectionate nature overflowing with murmured words of tenderness.

"I am so glad, Bobbie, if I have made you happy," he whispered. "You know I would do anything to do that, wouldn't I? But what is it all about, Bobs? Have I done anything very extraordinary, then? England was bound to beat those mounseer people, anyway, wasn't she?"

Bobbie disengaged himself hurriedly. He had his proofs with him—chapter and verse. He had been poring all the morning over a couple of score of newspapers, weeping over them as he only wept over his old Bible. He had brought them with him. He flaunted them in the face of John.

"Read *those*, if you want to know what you have done! Well, it's a proud day—a proud day—for poor old Bobbie, that's all I can say——," he cried, in a weak, broken voice, treading woebegone about the chamber, with his face in his hands once more.

John glanced through three or four of the papers, half sitting up in bed, while Bobbie held ever and again to his lips a large glass of warm egg and milk, for which the old butler had rung.

"Well, Bobbie," said John with a smile.

The *Times* concluded a lengthy article by saying: "Assuming that the account to hand of the battle, derived chiefly from the statement of Captain MacLeod, be correct in all its details, what words of eulogy shall we find in our English tongue to extol and glorify the very young man to whom Britain this day owes her immunity from the shame of an evading foot? In the times of ancient Rome, the people would have been accutely conscious of their inability to invent any Dignity equal to their sense of obligation to such a deliverer. This young man would have been proclaimed Saviour of his Country, and would have been intrusted with the supreme direction of affairs—naval, military, political—with the injunction to see to it *ne respublica damnum capiat*. How will England adjust herself to this new-found personality, of genius so commanding, in her midst? We wait with keen curiosity—and, we may add, with some anxiety—to see what shall be done by the Government to the man whom the nation delighteth to honour."

The *Daily Chronicle* lost itself in poetic allusion and far-fetched metaphor on the subject of John Hardy. It said: "What Nelson was to the ship of wood and sails, that, it is already clear, is this young man to the ship of steel and steam. That is to say, he is its genius. He is more still—he is its embodiment. Ralph Waldo Emmerson, in one of his essays, points out that occasionally a man is born who is himself, as it were, the Thing in connection with which his activities are employed; thus, Nasmyth was concentrated Iron, Stephenson was embodied Steel, Edison is himself Electricity, Rudyard was himself a Lighthouse. We may add—John Hardy is himself a modern Battleship."

But it was reserved for the *Daily Telegraph* to embody in its florid and ornamental style something of that shudder of delight with which England, through all her breadth, learnt, with that morning's sunrise, that she had still a son with a voice loud and hoarse enough to proclaim once more to all the earth her empire of the Sea. No style could have been too florid to express that day the feelings of the nation; for emotion is, in its very nature, florid; and England was in the grip of an emotion.

The *Telegraph* said: "No one has ever yet accused this journal of an undue tendency to hero-worship; and in speaking as we have spoken of Sub-Lieutenant John Hardy—whom, we confess, we have for the first time in our life heard of half-an-hour ago—it is partly the man whom we laud, but above all, it is the great nation that could have produced him. We have at command some special information about Mr. John Hardy; we know something of the family of sailors of which he is the latest, and greatest, product; and we say with the certainty of knowledge that he is as essentially an English thing as the Cliffs of Dover, or the smuts of the Black Country. No other country in the universe could have given birth to anything at all resembling him. He is doubly the child of England; for he is the child of the sea also. The sea is part of England. The oceans are not her boundary—they are her continuation. If one were to ask Mr. Hardy: 'What is the breadth of England?' he would probably reply: 'Her breadth is the distance between the Poles.' Such, at least, is the account we have received on good authority of the temperament of this latest scion of an old Hampshire family of thoroughgoing 'sea-dogs.'

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"For the rest, the young gentleman is said to have an ailment of the chest; he has the typical blue eyes of the English tar, and very light wavy hair, which he wears rather long. He is small in stature, and slim. His face is said to be the gravest, saddest, prettiest girl-face in the land; and his disposition in private life is much more than usually mild, yielding, and affectionate. Our informant hints at a supposed weakness for the fair sex, and confesses that at the examination stage of his career, the man who bids fair to become the new national hero proved himself far from brilliant.

"So much we have been able to gather; and this significant fact also: that from his earliest boyhood, Hardy has seemed to all who have known him to be deficient in one of the ordinary instincts of humanity—the instinct of Fear. Nothing, so far, has appeared to have had any tendency toward alarming him; to use our informant's words: 'He would remain cool if the earth were bursting to pieces.' Such is the man who has ranged himself on the side of England, and against the Allied nations of the Continent.

"This is no time of ordinary routines and gradual processes. The moment is ecstatic—the hour is immense with Fate. Let the nation for the nonce fling to the winds its old Shibboleths of Use and Wont, and now—without delay—proceed to garland with its fairest laurels the head which has been its salvation. It is certain that, but for John Hardy, we, writing here, should now have been writing with a boom of hostile cannon in our ears. What guerdon is high enough for the man who has averted such a doom? Fleet-Captain — Vice-Admiral — Admiral — these are the honorary titles that occur to us at the moment, as in no way commensurate with the reward which England owes, and will insist upon paying, to her deliverer.

"Nay, we know little of the English people, if it do not straightway find something so akin to its own secret temper, something so precisely like its own inner self, in John Hardy, and in the cool rashness of John Hardy, and in his contemptuous way, and in his audacious gallantry, and in his homely, Cromwellian grandeur of mind—that a burst of enthusiasm from the entire nation shall at once proclaim him its chosen and darling. England, as Mr. Mathew Arnold has said, is a Nation 'in the grand style'; John Hardy, we do not hesitate to say, is a Man 'in the grand style.' It will not be surprising if these two, having once come across each other, shall, without delay, strike up a friendship perhaps unparalleled in history. The beginning of such a friendship we to-day announce."

So the *Telegraph*. The *Standard*, on the other hand, came out with a long essay on Blood, showing how Blood, and Blood alone, had all through been the making of England. "A democracy without an aristocracy," it said, "is like an egg without salt, and is on the road to rottenness and ruin. It was necessary for Sub-Lieutenant Hardy, before he could annihilate the allied navies of Europe, to have behind him a long line of ancestors whose home was the sea. He stands high—but on a pedestal which is not himself. He is the apex of a pyramid, and the rest of the pyramid consists of centuries of the ocean-life and ocean-culture of a race. It is Blood that tells."

The *Clarionet*, on the contrary, a Socialist organ, insisted upon it that the success of this sub pointed to the necessity of the abolition of all distinctions of rank and class in the Army and Navy, where all should command in turn; while the stiff and stark *Morning Post* was the only organ bold enough to suggest that, while recognising the unbounded value of John Hardy's services, the country should insist upon the paramount importance of law and order, and see to it that, if only formally, the young lieutenant should be court-martialed for his breach of naval discipline. But the *Westminster Gazette*, a couple of hours later, came out with a brilliant cartoon, lampooning the *Post's* idea, with the representation of a court-martial sitting over a blue-jacket for sneezing during cutlass drill on one of Her Majesty's ships; while the *Evening News* covered itself with fame by saying: "By the Goddess of *Victory*, Nelson has slain his thousands; but by *Jupiter*, Hardy has slain his tens of thousands!"

There was hardly a journal in the country which did not join in this chorus of acclammation which rose to greet John Hardy as he woke from sleep on the morning of the 17th of March. He was the only person in England who saw his praises with anything like equanimity.

He glanced through three of the articles, then pushed the whole heap of papers from him.

"Well, Bobbie," he said, "it is nice to see one's name all about in the prints. But what is it all for?"

"There is the opinion of England," said old Robert proudly, "about a son of John Nelson Hardy, sir!"

"Of England, Bobs?" said John; "don't you believe that. These writing fellows are not England. England is silent—great and silent. She means more, Bobs, and says less. She will love me, too, for what I have done, perhaps—but different to this talk—in her own silent way——"

He stopped, coughing.

"Ah, that cough, Master John!" said Robert.

"Bother the cough! it is rather bad this morning though, isn't it? Do you know what I think I shall do, Bobbie?"

"Well, sir?"

"Go to a hot country at once."

"A hot—what, sir?"

"A hot country, Bobs."

Bobs was alarmed. He at once suspected diplomacy—that the cough was being made to serve as an excuse. Master John was whimsical, and wilful. Bobs knew what it meant when those dry rose-lips closed tightly together.

"Which country, Master John?" said the old man tremulously.

He feared horribly that the bird was about to fly from the old cage.

"Which country, sir?" he repeated, before John answered.

"I am thinking of China, Bobbie," said John.

The old man's hands went up, meeting in terror.

"China, Master John? Oh, don't, don't say China, Master John!"

"I believe that China is a hot country—in the summer, Bobbie?" said John with an intonation of innocent query.

"I know nothing about China, Master John. Certainly, it is no fit place for such as you."

"Oh, I don't see that, Bobbie."

"But why China, Master John, if you really think of going anywhere? China, recollect, is at the other end of the world."

"But that's where my ship is, isn't it, Bobbie?"

"Your ship? What, ships *again*?—and you coughing there like an echo among the Chiltern Hills? Well, well, I suppose it's no use an old man talking, who has served your father before you, and your grandfather before him."

"Yes it is, Bobbie; believe me, it is, Bobs! But still—really—you will try and be good, won't you? I must go, Bobbie."

"Well, that sea!" said Bobbie, with a hand over his mouth, shaking the head of contemplative wonderment. He was thinking of that "sea-fever" which, in the history of the house of Hardy, had more than once resulted in domestic tragedy and disaster.

"Well, that sea!" he said—"those ships!"

"No, it isn't quite that, Bobbie; it isn't the sea," said John. "Don't go blaming the sea. Of course, one is fond of the sea, and all that; but that isn't quite the reason now. I feel that I must go, and I must really."

"Well, but isn't that what I said, Master John?—that it is no use an old man talking? That no one pays any heed to him; no one whom he has watched over, and yearned his heart over, more than any son? Ah——" suddenly the old man fell half over the bed, imploring with tears. "Listen

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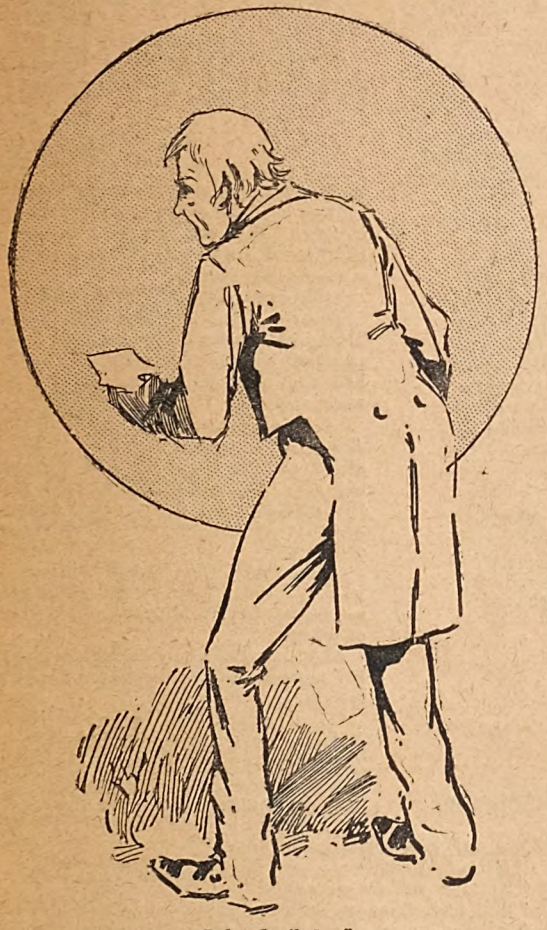
to me, Master Johnnie, do, now—give up these wild thoughts! What good can come of them? So, from a boy, it always was—and did old Bobbie ever lead you wrong? Do, now, don't think of such things—it is the Enemy puts them in your head—drive them away! Here is all England going to make much of you—why not stay with old Bobbie? Don't go, my son! Don't you go! You



Bobs shuffled off.

are not in a fit state, and it is no fit place, among a pack of heathen men, fighting fiends—what good can you do? Stay here with me! Can you suppose that I would tell you wrong? Come, now, comfort old Bobbie's heart—tell me——"

John Hardy rubbed his pink face against the old man's shrivelled cheek.

"It is so hard to say no to you, Bobbie," he said. "I hardly think it is right of you to urge me in that way. You see, I have made up my mind, and it is hardly—kind, is it? If one's mind is made up in a certain way, it is beyond one's power to change it, is it not? Go I must, you see."

The dry rose leaves were pressed very close together now, and Bobbie should have noticed them; but he went rashly on.

"Only listen to me, Master John," he said. "Hear me out——"

"No—no more," said John. "I bid you be silent now. Pass on a sheet of note-paper and a pencil."

Old Bobbie, mouse-quiet in a moment, hobbled to a desk, and then back with the required materials for writing.

John scribbled a few words, handed them to the old man, and said:

"It is all right, Bobbie. I am not the least cross, you know. But there are times when one must be allowed to go one's own way, aren't there? Have that telegram sent off at once, will you? And bring in a good big tumbler of champagne, will you, Bobs?"

The telegram with which Bobs shuffled off contained these words:

To Selby, Captain of *English Bird*, lying at Freshwater.
Please have *English Bird* ready to sail by Sunday night, at latest. Going coast Spain.

John Hardy.

The *English Bird* was a 74-ton schooner-yacht of John Hardy's own, with an easy speed of twelve knots.

CHAPTER X.

John Hardy Among Women.

John Hardy had a love-trouble. He was extremely "non-intellectual," and his passion had fastened upon a person all intellect.

Had his entry into the Royal Navy depended upon his passing the usual competitive examination as a competitor, he would certainly never have entered it. As it was, he was a "service cadet," and had received a nomination as the son of an officer of the navy who had performed long and distinguished service. Even so, he had had to pass a test examination; and in this very elementary ordeal he had failed in the subject, "French." Once more he received a nomination, and once more he was given a chance in the examination hall of the Commissioners of Cannon Row—his very last. During all that half year he was "swotting" like an elephant at the fatal "French," to the hopeless neglect of "Scripture," which was another of his weak points. During the hot week in June preceding the examination, he was a true slave of the lamp; but his strong Will this time was at work. With his lucky knack, he scraped through. The lowest number of marks which could "pass" him was 660: he got 662.

John Hardy was not a book-man; he had even a secret profound contempt for book-men, and book-learning.

Moreover, as we said before, he got into more trouble later on. While in training on board the *Britannia* he had been reported to the Admiralty for "unsatisfactory conduct," and had been "warned." The "unsatisfactory conduct" consisted in walking arm-in-arm with a girl of the lowest class through the streets of Dartmouth, both the girl and John being pretty far gone in a state of intoxication.

These, then, were his weak points: That he was far from literary; that he was too fond of drink; that he was too fond of feminine persons.

Up to the time at which we meet him, he still made spelling mistakes in common English words in writing ordinary letters to his friends.

In five or six of the ports of Europe there were more than one young woman who were thinking with regret and longing of the crinkled hair and angel-eyes of John Hardy. He was painfully shy in the presence of women, and he was a very clumsy and heavy lover—but he was also very beautiful and *naïf*: and one thing made up for the other. On the whole, he "arrived."

He loved every woman in the world; and this love was, in general, returned.

But most of all he loved Bosey Jay; and Bosey, apparently, did not love him. Her love was already taken up by something else—something which she called "Art."

Poor John Hardy had no sort of conception what "Art" was all about. He could admire the sleekness of a 111-ton gun, and give an unerring opinion on the sheer of a ship's beam; but between all that and "Art" there is a biggish interval.

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Both the girl and John being pretty far gone in a state of intoxication.

He went to see her on the afternoon of the day on which he sent the telegram to Freshwater. A narrow strip of black plaster concealed the scratch on his forehead. He was in the habit, even on visits of ceremony, of wearing a rather rough and heavy pea-jacket, such as pilots wear, with brass buttons, and thus attired, he went out into the streets, a soft felt hat on his head.

Could he have been recognised, he would have been lifted high on the shoulders of the people, and carried to his destination.

A servant ushered him into a very dainty inner room at Park Lane—a kind of luxurious studio-boudoir, in a rather Greek style, with Corinthian pillows, and flimsy saffron hangings. Bosey was an heiress, and lived in a stately solitude. There now she sat before an easel, with brush and mahl stick and palette.

She was a lady of many accomplishments. She sang like a bird; she had written two novels of the "problem" kind; she was a sociologist; she had painted one knows not how many pictures; she was not yet nineteen; and she was rather pretty.

Bosey had a fairly substantial body, with a waist, that struck one as being quite as large as that of Eve or Venus. She wore her red-gold hair in coil upon coil of *négligé* richness about her head; her eyes were a bright green.

In her large countenance, and the curves of her full lips, there was quick intelligence, and strong self-assurance. The hard bones of her corsets were not more visible through her bodice than the iron which underlay her character, as evidenced in her face.

"Oh, Mr. Hardy, I am glad!" she cried, springing up vivaciously as John entered the studio. "Ah, and I have heard! I have heard!"

"About the battle, and all that?"

"What else, if 'all that' means Mr. John Hardy? Do sit down. How very brave you must be!"

"All Englishmen are brave."

"Are they? A good many of them are detestable cowards, to *my* certain knowledge. Men do so live in regions of fantasy! Women are more prosaic—and clearer. Did you ever see an average English girl in the sovereign presence of a mouse, Mr. Hardy?"

"Girls are different," said John.

Bosey's lips tightened with pressure. This was precisely the kind of ancient point of view, purely male, to which she had the most touchy antipathy. John was hopelessly "old," she actively "new."

"Oh, different, of course," she said, "in pose of nervous structure, and so on, and so on. But is it not rather cheap to say it? And substitute for the mouse the broker's man, and you get at once a measure of the average Englishman's courage."

"Somebody has been telling you wrong," said John. "All Englishmen are brave. Only foreign people are afraid of things."

She looked at him in absolute pity, for his narrowness, his insularism, his unintelligence.

"But why *telling* me, Mr. Hardy? Did you say *telling* me? Can it be that you still think an ordinary educated girl incapable of observing for herself? You have still quite the harem idea I see."

"I? Oh, now you are not kind. Why, if you only knew how much I like girls!"

"*Merci!* That is *so*—condescendingly good of you."

"Ah, now you are sarcastic."

"Ha! ha! You are *too* shrewd, you know."

"I never know whether you are making fun of me, or not."

"Well, what does it matter, Mr. John?" she said, softening. "It could be of no consequence, one way or the other."

"But it is not nice to be made fun of by some one whom you like."

"Really *like*?"

"You know."

"You are too complimentary."

"Like isn't the word. I think I like you better than anyone in the whole world."

"Now you are spooney—deliberately so."

"I should be as happy as the Queen, if you would only like me back."

"Spooney! Spooney!"

"You are not making fun?"

"Don't be so suspicious. You are too penetrating."

"Well, what do you say?"

"To what?"

"To my liking you so much?"

"I say that it is distinctly and malignantly spooney."

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"But do you like me back?"

"Oh, *I!* Well, yes, as you ask me. I like you—back. But in my own fashion, you understand; not in that wickedly and designingly spooney way."

"I do not understand you," said John. "You are not like other girls."

"Then logically you should not like me, since you like other girls so very, very much."

"I do, though. I like you much better than any of the others. You must not go by Logic."

"Ah, but I am nothing, if not logical, Mr. Hardy."

"But facts are facts, aren't they? If logic contradicts a Fact, then you must throw the logic overboard to the sharks. I tell you I like you better than anyone. That is enough."

"Enough for what?—for me?"

"It should be."

"Really? But our human nature is more or less complex, I suppose? Do you mean that the mere fact of your caring for me should be enough to lead me to corresponding actions? That is absurd, you know. I take it that you are a great advocate of the 'free-born Briton' principle, and all that, aren't you? Well, I am, too. Listen, Mr. Hardy: we first met, how long ago?—about five weeks, I think—at Lady Sinclair's, you remember. And since then, how many times?—about six, perhaps. Well, I can see that you are used to easy conquests, you know; and at once I detected that you were laying yourself out to be captured by me, if I chose to take the trouble to capture you. But I did not choose! I have other things—quite other things—to think of, and it will be as much as I can possibly do, supposing I live for eighty years in tolerable health of body, to get through the little all I have in mind. I am not going to say that it is out of the question that some day I may not allow myself to be seduced into marriage by some man or other, but, at the moment, it is a thing as wildly remote from the actual current of my thoughts, that, I assure you, it has quite the look of an impossibility. All the time, mind you, I am vividly alive to the fact that it is very nice to be petted and kissed by charming lips; but it is not, you see, precisely what I have chosen for myself. You know about 'scorning delights and living laborious days,' don't you? Well, that is my way. So I beg, once and for all, that you will be more sensible with respect to me for the future, Mr. John."

As the last words passed her lips, a long sigh escaped from John Hardy, and this sentence, barely whispered, came from him:

"*You* are the girl for me, by the Lord!"

She heard him, and cried:

"Mr. Hardy!"

At that moment he had first definitely resolved to marry her. His lips were pressed together.

"I am going to China in a day or two," he said. "I should very much like to marry you before I go."

She broke into ripples of evil laughter.

"Not so soon! Not so soon!" she cried.

"When I come back," he said simply.

She looked into his face in unfeigned surprise.

"Have I not *told* you?" she cried, almost with alarm. "What do you mean? I am a free subject, you know. This is not Turkey; this is not—Peru. Do you mean that because you are to be the national hero, and all that . . .? Oh, but that is in rather bad taste, then!"

"I love you!"

"I don't care!"

"I *do!*"

"You do not!"

"I shall have you yet!"

"*Have* me? What do you mean?"

"I shall have you."

"Silly. *Go* away! This is *too* absurd!"

She stamped. The dry rose-leaves had brushed her cheek

"Oh, Mr. Hardy, I am so glad."

So far had passion led John Hardy. Then he started backward—to this point he had never dared before, on his own initiative. A shock of shyness gripped him; he blushed a vivid scarlet.

"Ah, now I have presumed," he said, stammering. "Forgive me—I will go——"

"Well, it is of no consequence, Mr. Hardy," she answered, "but perhaps you had better go."

"Well then— But you understand that I am going to China?"

"Perfectly. You are lucky. I should like to go there also. The Chinese are quite charming artists."

"While I am away you will not be marrying anyone else?"

"Not I. You may be confident that I shall remain ab-so-lute-ly self-sufficient. Even the new National Darling, you see, cannot tempt me."

"Good-bye. I am going."

"Then go."

"When I come back from China, I shall have you."

"Well, we won't argue the point now. I am awfully sorry for you, you know, because you *look* cut up. But you will soon get over it, and it will do you good. You were over confident, you know. Will you say good-bye, now?"

"May I kiss your hand?"

"Yes, if that is any comfort to you."

He kissed her hand with an old-fashioned reverent grace; caught up his hat from the top of a cabinet, and was gone.

(To be continued.)

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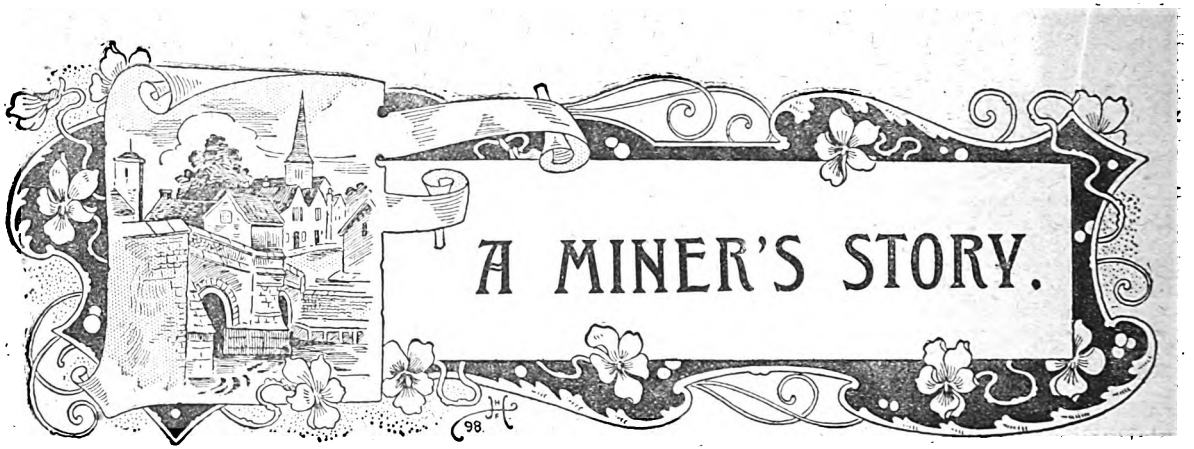

There were only three in our party. Tom and I had come to Coolgardie together, being old mates, and we came across Bill. He was a queer chap always, but he would work all day like a horse. Why, he seemed as if he worked of nights after he's turned in, did Bill.

When Tom and I first came across him, Bill was down on his luck. This Tusker had just about panned out, and he hadn't got a shilling left to buy water, which, seeing how water was £1 a bucket at Coolgardie just then, was awkward. Yes, we were a godsend to Bill, that's about what we were, Tom and I, when we offered to take him in mates. Not but what it was right enough for us, too. Tom and I had a matter of maybe £30 between us, and we were pretty old hands at the job, but the place was new to us, and Coolgardie, like most fields, had ways of its own. Now, Bill, he'd been here two months, and he knew all there was to know about the place, and so it came about as we went mates with Bill, and just then Bill was mighty glad to be took by anybody as could get a bit of tucker and a bucket of water.

One thing was sure, Bill hadn't always been a digger; he hadn't been at it very long, that was clear.

We stopped at Coolgardie for a month, and it was long enough, too. Gold there was, but it wanted finding, and we didn't find it.

We were getting pretty near tired of it; especially Bill. One day there came news that gold had been struck heavy to the north-west, a matter of twenty miles off or so. Bill was wild to be off, and though we heard that there was no water found yet it stood to reason that somebody would find it, and, anyhow, water carts were sure to go where there was gold. The new field was out beyond the red-sunset range, and we concluded to see what it was like.

When we reached the place we camped in a likely-looking spot all by ourselves. Tom called it Dry-grass Gully, because it was one sheet of some short grass as yellow as gold. There was no time to lose, for, do your best, you had to drink more water than another party to be seen from the ridge of our gully. It looked like a race between luck and thirst, and the thirst was sure while the luck was doubtful. I can't say I liked the look of things, no more did Tom, but Bill was just wild.

Anyhow, we had come and we were bound to give it a trial. For three days we worked in that gully early and late, and every hour the water got lower, and we grew more and more thirsty. Thirst! Never in all my life had I known what it meant before—our throats burnt and ached, our eyes sank in our heads, our hands began to tremble, and, work as hard as we might, our skin got drier and hotter. We had found gold. It was no use trying to dig for it, but we had hunted about over a good part of the gully and there was gold everywhere. But what was the good? That night when we knocked off there was only about a quart and a half of water left in the keg. I looked at Tom and Tom looked at me, and I could see that it was settled.

"It's all up, mate," said Tom, "and a pity, too, for there's gold here, and no mistake."

I looked at Bill, but he said nothing.

"Yes, Tom," I replied, "it's all we'll do to get back on the water that is left, unless we have the luck to fall in with some."

Bill looked from one of us to the other, and at last he broke out:

"Going back, are you? Going back, when here's gold to make us rich, waiting for us?"

"It'll have to wait, then, mate," said Tom. "Gold's good, but it ain't quite good enough."

Bill looked from Tom to me, and his eyes shone in the dusk of the tent.

"You mean it, do you?" he said, in a sort of hoarse whisper.

"Mean it? I should say so, mate!" said Tom, his throat too dry to allow him to say much more.

Bill looked round, first at one and then at the other of us, and then without a word he got up and flung himself out of the tent. I saw him marching down the gully throwing his arms above his head in the moonlight, for it was full moon that night.

"Bill's cranky, Tom," said I.

"Looks like it, mate. Well, he'll come to his bearings by morning."

With that Tom coiled himself on his blanket and went to sleep, and after a minute or two I did the same. It was daylight when I awoke and looked round. There was Tom lying where he dropped overnight, but I saw nothing of Bill.

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"Hullo," I tried to say, but I couldn't say it rightly, my throat was so dry. "Bill isn't here, Tom," said I.

"No, more he ain't," answered Tom, sitting up; "the more water for you and me, mate."

We scrambled out from under the tent. The sun was just up, but there wasn't a sign of Bill, look where we would.

"The dickens," said Tom suddenly, looking hard at the tent. "He's been here, sure enough, and left this note. Dick, you're a scollard, wot's this wrote on the tent?"

Sure enough, on the flap of the tent, was written, with something that looked like chalk:

"You want to go back to Coolgardie—you can go. I've found what I came for, and it's mine now. Good-bye, Bill."

"He's mad, Tom," said I at last, "and he's gone without a drain of water, poor beggar."

"Mad or not, I expect he's come across a nugget, and he means to keep it. Not if I knows it, mate, not by chalks. Fair dealings atween mates is wot I says."

It was never much good arguing with Tom. He was bent on getting hold of Bill and sharing the nugget. At last I gave in, and we risked it and started. It was easy to see the way Bill had gone, for there were his marks on the soft ground and sand, not clear, but as like as not the first steps that had ever been there since it was first made. "He couldn't have gone far," Tom said, and we took the drop of water that was left and started.

I won't tell you how we struggled on hour after hour, and how we suffered from the heat of the sun and from thirst. But at last the sun went down behind a hill.

Suddenly I found myself in a blinding glare of sunlight once more, and then I knew, though I couldn't see, that I had at last reached the top of a hill. I put my trembling hand over my eyes, and little by little I began to see. At first it was gold, gold, only a great sea of shining, dazzling gold—then it began to grow clear and I saw—oh, heavens, what was it I saw? Water! Yes, glittering, flashing, blazing, it was water! Tom was behind me now, and I tried to shout; but I could only point and wave my arms like a madman.

In another minute Tom had come up. He was, like me, nearly dead, and staggered like a drunkard; but he got there somehow.

But where was Bill? I looked and Tom looked. There was the golden grass, and the low bushes, and the water that flashed and quivered in the low bottom, where the sunlight made a yellow haze round the trees that stood here and there with drooping boughs along the course of the creek; but not a living creature in sight—not a sign of the mate we had risked so much to find.

We stood for a minute, and then Tom whispered hoarsely:

"Look here, mate, wot's the odds about Bill? Here's water, which is better than nuggets."

We staggered rather than walked down the slope with the level sun shining in our faces. We dragged one heavy foot after the other. Doggedly, slowly, feebly, we did it; but somehow we did do it.

Tom had got a few yards ahead, and of a sudden he stopped. As I came up he pointed to one side and whispered:

"Look, mate, Bill's there!"

He was. Parched as we were, we couldn't pass him. The gush and the whisper of the water was in our ears; but we couldn't pass Bill. Could he hear it, too? We crept over to where he lay. He was half sitting, half lying against a boulder, and he was looking the other way, so that we couldn't see his face, but Tom had been right. A big, rough, shapeless lump of almost pure gold was lying on the sand before him—his hands lay beside it on the ground—his fingers somehow looked as if they had been stroking it.

"Bill!" I said as loud as I could. "Bill!"

He never turned his head—he never moved. I went closer—I looked in his face—then I knew. Bill was dead. His hollow eyes stared out straight before him; his head was bent a little forward as if he were listening. With the sound of the water in his ears, with his nugget on the ground at his side—Bill was dead.

We looked at him, but we said nothing. Then we staggered down to the creek—it wasn't fifty yards off from where he lay. There we drank and drank again. Then we let the water run over our hands and dipped our dry faces in the stream. At last we went back to Bill.

We stood and looked at him, Tom and I.

"What's that in his other hand, mate?" Tom said in a whisper.

It was a letter, worn and brown, and frayed along the edge.

"Let's bury it with him, Tom," I said.

"Not us, mate. Fair dealings between mates—that's what I say—maybe it'll tell who it belongs to—read it, mate; it can't hurt no one now."

I read the letter as well as I could. No need to say what it said, but when I had read it both Tom and I looked in Bill's dead face, and then we understood. It wasn't a new story—I had heard it often before—a story of a young, delicate wife and her little children brought to want and disgrace by a thoughtless husband and father, and yet seeming to love him all the more. No wonder Bill was mad to get gold—no wonder he looked anxious and eager.

"What's the address?" Tom asked me, after a bit.

I told him what was on the letter. Tom stooped and lifted the big nugget in both hands.

"Right, mate," he said. "There's enough here to give them a start."

Not another word was said. So Tom gave up his share; so Bill got his nugget after all.

A. H. Parsons.

Result of "Empress" Competition.

A copy of "The Final War" has been forwarded to each of the following competitors, who discovered the greatest number of discrepancies between the text and illustrations in the first instalment of "The Empress of the Earth":

T. E. Gooden, 19 Bark Street, Bolton.
T. W. Rose, 103 Derby Road, Southampton.
G. Batty, 13 Regent Road, Morecambe.
J. E. Sorrel, 196 Lakedale Road, Plumstead.
L. W. Judd, 2 Alfred Villas, Stanton Road, Barnes.
J. Murphy, 36 Clorliffe Road, Dublin.
R. Phipps, 16 Hall Street, Sale, Cheshire.
J. Ferguson, 7 Tullock's Buildings, Inverness.
G. H. Perceval, 17 Warminster Road, South Norwood.
W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley, Essex.

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A LOW LIFE IDYL.

Among the dingy and humble streets of the eastern part of a huge, cruel metropolis, a little boy had dwelt for seven years, in the shabbiest street of them all, and had scarcely known a single day when he could move his tiny and wasted body without pangs of the sharpest pain.

He had only his mother for a companion, though often the neighbours were kind, and would come in and sit beside him and say cheering words—women and little girls would chiefly, and sometimes, of an evening men. Boys rarely came, and when they did appear they always had a shy and constrained manner as though their parents had forced them to see the presence of the little sufferer.

Often his mother would be compelled to spend hours away from him, which were passed in solitude, for his mother was very poor and had to go and seek what work she could get; the neighbours were all very poor as well, and sometimes were forced to leave babies in their cradles with only a child, not as old as Willie himself, to watch them.

But while the slow years dragged along, Willie had grown to find a great consolation during these periods of loneliness. Once very long ago, as it now seemed to him, his mother had said, when he was peevish and fretful because of his incessant pain:

"Suppose you can't get up and walk about, and play like other children! There's little Lottie Lynn, just over the way, who's the same age you are, and hasn't spoken a single word. She's deaf and dumb. Now oughtn't you to be thankful that God didn't make you deaf and dumb?"

Willie reflected for a while. Then he said: "Yes; I ought to be thankful, mother." After more musing, he added: "Can't she say a *single* word?"

"No, not one, Willie. Just think of it! She was born so."

"Wouldn't they let her come over here and see me?" asked Willie, after another pause.

"I'm afraid not," replied Mrs. Gray, pursing her lips rather grimly. "Her mother's a proud sort. She's 'shamed she's got a dumb child, I believe. But there the child is, Willie, over the way! Now you rec'lect about her, and just bless your lucky stars you ain't afflicted like poor Lottie Lynn!"

Willie kept pondering day by day, and week by week, on the wretched fate of the child so near him. It must be so dreadful not to have the power of speech. Many a forlorn moment was soothed for him by the thought that he could tell his mother just where the pain was, and have her give him what help she could.

"Does Lottie Lynn ever feel as ill as I do?" he once asked; and the question startled his mother into a merciful falsehood.

"Oh, yes, Willie, she's very ill sometimes."

"And she can't talk about it," murmured Willie. "She can't tell them how to help her, like I can. That must be very bad, mother, mustn't it?"

"Oh, terrible bad—terrible!" And Mrs. Gray's kiss touched her boy's wan cheek. "Now just *think* how grateful *you* should be!"

"Yes, yes!" said Willie. And soon afterwards, during a surcease of distress, he fell asleep with "poor Lottie Lynn" on his lips.

Later he said to his mother: "Lottie Lynn ain't always ill is she?"

"N—no; not always."

"Oh, then, I do wish they would let her come over and see me on one of her well days! Won't you ask 'em? Won't you?"

The idea of meeting Lottie Lynn preyed, through some strange sympathy of misery, upon Willie's mind. "Poor little thing," he would keep saying to himself over and over again, with a compassion pathetically droll, "poor little thing!"

"I declare I'll just go and ask them Lynns if they *won't* let the child come over here an' set by my boy," Mrs. Gray at length decided.

But her project failed. Mrs. Lynn was a small, fragile woman, who never left her rooms except when forced to leave them. She worked monotonously all day at a sewing-machine, and her young daughters, of whom there were three or four with slight difference between their ages, did all her errands. But Lottie, the little dumb girl, hardly ever left her side.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Gray!" she said, in answer to the request of Willie's mother. "I can't spare Lottie—I really can't!"

And her thin, bluish lips tightened as she looked down at the half-finished garment which lay limp and white below the perpendicular sewing-machine needle, with its steely glitter.

"Very well; just as you say," sniffed her visitor.

She thought her neighbour's reluctance meant pride, but it meant only shame. She hated to have her dumb Lottie go abroad. She dreaded those heedless and cynical comments which might be passed upon the afflicted child. She made more money than Mrs. Gray did, and in a general way got on better with her family of fatherless little girls. It was, doubtless, cruel and ill-judged of Willie's mother to define her motive so harshly. But Mrs. Gray passed from her presence with an angry and gloomy discontent.

For many months afterwards Willie lay in his bed, bearing the burden of his weakness and his intense fits of bodily torment with far more patience than of old. Mrs. Gray knew her darling could never be cured, and never even be permanently eased. Hospital doctors had told her so, and a really great physician had once dropped into her boy's room, and made a thorough examination of his poor twisted little body. He had told her that Willie's case was a very remarkable one,

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considering how long he had lived, and that it would be a miracle if he should survive his seventh year.

And now, in his seventh year, he showed signs that his feeble life was flickering. He would have fainting fits, and these made her fearful of leaving him alone. Still, by the most rigid thrift she had managed to save a little money, and work was not an immediate necessity. While she now kept almost ceaseless vigil at her son's bedside, one or two of the neighbours would slip into the room every day; and so, on a certain afternoon, there came to her the whispered tidings that the little dumb girl across the street had suddenly died.

She was a very humane and sweet-hearted woman, and yet for a while she forgot even to pity Mrs. Lynn. All through his later illness Willie had been murmuring half-broken sentences about "poor little dumb Lottie Lynn," and she had made up her mind that in a day or two if her boy rallied again, she would go over and beg Lottie's mother, even if she had to beg on her knees, that the child might be brought to her son. And now, Lottie was dead.

Towards evening she grew mindful of her own selfishness. A kind-hearted girl who lived on the lower floor —an old friend of Willie's—volunteered to sit by him while she paid a visit of sympathy to Mrs. Lynn. She and her bereaved neighbour became fast friends from that hour.

"You spoke so sweet and nice to me," said the mother of Lottie, a day or two after her child's funeral. "I could see how you felt for me. Nobody was quite like you, somehow. I s'pose it's because of your own poor sick boy. And I wouldn't let Lottie go to him, though you told me he he wanted to see her."

"Never mind that," said Mrs. Gray.

"Oh, yes, I do mind it," returned Mrs. Lynn, as she sat in a chair, weak and white, wrapped in a heavy shawl which Mrs. Gray had lent her, and watched by her silent, wide-eyed little girls, all so like the dead one, and the eldest of them seeming absurdly young by contrast with her sisters. "How's your Willie? Is he any better to-day?"

"No; he's worse, I believe," said Mrs. Gray. "I just ran over to see how *you* was. I've got to go back at once. Tilly Ratchett—you know Tilly—is minding him. But oh, Mrs. Lynn, he does moan and call so for——"

The speaker paused. The two women stared into each others eyes. Mrs. Lynn understood, and her slim, pale throat quivered.

"I know what you mean," she muttered. "Here's the other girls. Any one of 'em would do. Take Lizzie, there. She and Lottie, except for an inch or so in height, was like as two peas. Lizze'll play off her sister. She'll keep mum—won't you, Liz dear?"

"Oh, yes," cried the child thus addressed. She sprang to her mother's side; she was intelligent, even for her age, which had nearly passed nine years. She met Mrs. Gray's worriedly questioning eyes with a sweet, firm look.

"I understand what you want me to do, Mrs. Gray," she said. She was a comely child, with fluffy, flaxen hair, and fresh, pink lips and beautifully white teeth.

"God bless you!" faltered Mrs. Gray. She caught the little girl to her breast and kissed her. "Come over with me, then, Lizzie. He doesn't dream your sister's dead. I wouldn't let anybody tell him; I didn't dare. And you'll make believe dumb, just like Lottie, won't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Lizzie with great solemnity. "I'll—I'll make believe, Mrs. Gray, all I can."

Willie lay in sore pain when his new guest was brought to him; but he brightened, and even laughed aloud as he heard that Lottie Lynn, the dumb girl, had consented to come and see him at last. He clutched Lizzie's plump and rosy little hand in his own wan and frail one. "Oh, I'm so glad, I'm so glad!" he murmured. "You can't speak, Lottie, can you? It's too bad! But you don't look ill. Mother said you were ill sometimes, but I s'pose you've got quite well now, ain't you?"

He failed to remember, in his happy excitement, that his mother had told him Lottie Lynn was deaf as well as dumb.

"I dunno what I should do, Lottie, if I couldn't talk at all, like you can't. It must be awful hard *never* to say the least mite of a word to *nobody*.

"Oh, Lottie," cried the boy's plaintive voice, "I *do* suffer so! I *do* suffer so!"

And then Lizzie Lynn forgot the part she was playing. Catching Willie's hand in both her own, she leaned over him and answered: "I am so sorry for you! I am! I am!"

Mrs. Gray, terrified and astonished, hurried to the bed and separated the children's hands. Another fainting fit had fallen upon her son, and when he awoke from it Lizzie Lynn had gone.

But Willie had remembered her words to him. "Lottie Lynn was so sorry for me, mother," he repeatedly said, through all the stillness of the night which followed, "that she forgot she was born dumb, didn't she? And now she won't be dumb any more, will she? Ain't that nice? *Ain't* it nice?"

And a little after dawn, with these two self-comforting questions on his lips, Willie Gray died.

Will Summers.

DO YOU KNOW ANY SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS?

IF SO, READ THIS.

The Editor of the *Sunday Reader* is sending each week to one thousand Sunday-schools a *free and carriage paid* parcel of *current numbers* of the *Sunday Reader*.

The copies are not sent to the same Sunday-schools each week, but a register is kept, and every week one thousand names are selected for free grants of *Sunday Readers* until the whole register has been dealt with and every school on the list has received a parcel of papers.

The journals sent are not back numbers, but the current week's issue, and are, therefore, worth one penny each. No charge whatever is made to the Sunday-schools participating in this grant, even the postage being paid by the *Sunday Reader*.

All Superintendents or Teachers who wish their Sunday-schools to benefit by this remarkable offer, should send a post-card to the address below *at once*, stating the name and address of the school, and also of the Superintendent. *Parcels will in all cases be forwarded to the Superintendent.* The papers may be used in any way likely to benefit the Sunday-school.

Every Sunday-school in Britain may be put upon the register and the names will be taken in rotation and *Sunday Readers* sent in due course.

Applications must be only upon post-cards, and should be addressed "Sunday-school," *Sunday Reader* Office, 17 Henrietta street, London, W.C. The number of scholars in the school should be stated.

This is not an offer to certain Sunday-schools, but *every Sunday-school in the country* may participate.

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THE GOOSEHERD.

Yes, there is a difference in the feelings of the refined and the uncultured classes, which makes it impossible for them to live happily together. I had an experience of this in my first love.

Do you know who my first love was? A gooseherd—a real gooseherd. I am not joking. Long after I was a highly respectable young lady, I wept bitter tears over the sorrow he had caused me.

To be sure, at the time when he first set my heart a-fire, I was still in that period of my life when my highest ideal of happiness was to go barefoot. I was eight, he about ten years old; I was the daughter of the lord of the manor, he, the son of our smith.

In the morning, as I was drinking coffee upon the balcony with mamma and my elder brother, he used to go by with his geese and vanish in the direction of the heath. At first he stared at us with naive wonder, without thinking to remove his cap; but after my brother had admonished him that it would be suitable for him to offer a morning greeting to the quality, he would swing his cap in great circles in the air and call up to us, "Good-morning, all," exactly as though he had learnt it by heart.

If my brother happened to be in a good humour I would receive permission to take a roll down to him, as a recognition of his urbanity. This he always snatched out of my hand with a certain greedy anxiety, as though there were danger of my taking it back again.

I can see him now; his sleek, blonde hair hung in a yellow thatch over his sunburnt cheeks; from under it his blue eyes peeped slyly and merrily out; his tattered trousers he had rolled up above his knees, and in his hand he held a slender willow switch, in the green bark of which his skilful hand had cut a spiral row of white rings.

My childish desire first fastened itself upon this switch. I thought it would be charming to hold in my hand such a marvel, so different from all my playthings, and when I had completed the picture by imagining myself driving geese with it and going barefoot, I had reached the pinnacle of earthly bliss.

Naturally, it was this same switch which drew us together. One morning I secretly clapped together the roll spread with honey which I was eating and, hastily excusing myself, ran after him.

When he saw me coming he stopped and looked at me in astonishment, but as soon as he spied the roll in my hand his eye beamed with intelligence.

"Will you give me your switch?" I asked.

"Naw—why?" he returned.

"Because I want it," I replied haughtily, adding more mildly, "and I will give you my roll."

His glance rested longingly upon the dainty morsel, but finally he said: "Naw, I must herd the geese with it; but I'll make you one jus' like it."

"Can you do that yourself?" I asked, filled with admiration.

"Oh, that's nothin' at all," he laughed scornfully. "I c'n make flutes too."

I was so completely carried away by this that I handed him my roll without further ceremony.

That evening brought me the promised switch, which was even more beautiful than my boldest dreams had painted it. What a happy creature I was!

After that we were friends. I divided with him the dainties which were showered from all sides upon me, the darling of the household. In return he dedicated to me the creations of his nimble fingers—flutes, little boxes, houses, dolls' furniture, and above all, his celebrated dancing men, through which I presently became the terror of the entire family.

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Behind the goose coop we held our nightly rendezvous, and exchanged our gifts.

I looked forward all day with joy to this occasion, my thoughts busied with my young hero. I saw him lying in the grass on the sunny heath playing his flute, while I was being tormented with abominable French verbs, and my desire to share that happiness called goose-herding, grew stronger and stronger.

When I confided my feeling to him, he laughed aloud and said:

"Why don't you come too?"

That was enough; and without further deliberation I replied:

"I will go to-morrow."

"But don't forget to bring something to eat," my friend reminded me.

Fortune favoured me. Mademoiselle had a headache at exactly the right time, and put off our lesson. Half beside myself with joy and fear, I sat at the coffee-table, and waited until he came by. My pockets were stuffed full of all sorts of dainties which I had begged from "Mamselle," and beside me lay the switch, which I thought to-day to brandish in loyal fulfilment of my duty.

There he came marching along. He glanced at me with a sly twinkle in his eye as he roared his "Good-morning, all" at us. As soon as I could escape without being observed, I ran after him.

"What have you brought?" was his first remark.

"Two spice cakes, two pieces of bread-and-butter, with brain sausage, a sardine sandwich, and a piece of gooseberry tart," I said, displaying my riches.

He immediately began to eat, while I, scarcely able to restrain my joy, proudly drove the geese before us.

Away on the heath we played husband and wife. Elsie, the tamest of the geese, was our child. We had almost kissed and thrashed the poor thing to death before it succeeded by unheard-of exertions in freeing itself from our hands. After this I prepared dinner for my husband. I took off my white apron, laid it upon the grass for a tablecloth, and grouped the remainder of our food upon it. He seated himself gravely down before it, and I, for my part, was so happy to see with what dispatch he consumed one thing after another that our little house was almost too small to contain me.

The hours passed as in a dream. The sun mounted higher and higher, until its glowing rays shone straight down upon us. I began to feel tired and stupid. I was also hungry; but my husband had eaten everything up. My mouth was dry, and my lips feverish. To cool them, I picked the damp grasses and pressed them to my mouth.

Suddenly the sound of ringing bells floated from afar across the wood. I knew well what that implied; it was the noon signal calling me to dinner.

I sprang up and ran as though pursued by furies.

The next morning my poor friend appeared in the *rôle* of kidnapper and abductor before the High Court of Inquisition. He seemed to regard it as a matter of course that he should figure as whipping-boy, made not the slightest attempt to shift any of the blame from his own shoulders, and took the chastisement administered by my brother with the utmost peace of mind.

Pensively smiling, he rubbed his smarting back on the posts of the verandah, and then hastily took his departure, while I rolled on the ground, sobbing bitterly.

After that I loved him. I devised a thousand expedients to meet him secretly. I purloined like a magpie, in order that he might refresh himself upon the fruits of my thefts. I almost overwhelmed him with tenderness in my efforts to undo that dreadful whipping.

He allowed my love to pass quietly over him, and repaid me with touching attachment and a healthy appetite.

Half a year later fate separated us, and it was nine years before I returned to my old home. My return was sadder than I had ever anticipated. A severe nervous fever attacked me, which confined me for many weeks to my bed. Medical skill had, indeed, wrested me from death, but the blooming young maiden had become a pale, weak shadow. My doctor prescribed as a tonic country air and pine-needle baths, so I was bundled into the train and transported to our country estate.

As I lay back in my chair, thinking, I wondered what had become of my old friend.

"What has become of him?" I asked my brother, and received the pleasant information that he had grown into a spruce, clever lad, and was already the efficient assistant of his father, the smith.

I felt how my heart beat. I tried to reason myself out of such foolishness, but was only partially successful. The dear old memories would not be driven away. Finally I fought them no longer, but painted the picture of our meeting with all the gorgeous colouring of fairyland.

A few days after my arrival I was able to take my first drive, that is to say, I was lifted into the carriage and driven to a peaceful little spot in the woods, where I was laid on the soft moss.

I had selected the place with great care. It offered a view of the smithy, where the playfellow of my youth was at work.

My brother wished to remain with me, and I besought him earnestly not to let me interfere with his customary occupations, for the little maid who attended me quite sufficed to protect me from surprise. And what harm could come to me in the peaceful home wood?

So he drove back home, promising to return for me within two hours.

Then I sent my little companion off to pick strawberries, cautioning her, however, to remain near at hand, and away she sprang with a gleeful shout.

I was alone. Thank goodness, now I could dream to my heart's content. The firs rustled above me, and from the smithy the muffled sound of the hammer rang out on the summer air. The fire upon the forge was blazing brightly, and now and again a dark figure passed in front of it. That must be he.

I never tired of following his movements. I admired his strength and trembled for his safety when the glowing sparks flew about him.

The moments slipped by. My brother surprised me in the midst of my dreamy observation.

"Well, has the time seemed long to you?" he asked jokingly.

I shook my head smilingly and tried to raise myself a little, but was obliged to sink back exhausted on my cushions.

"H'm, h'm!" he said meditatively. "I left the coachman at home, because I thought I could lift you into the carriage by myself; but the seat is high, and I fear I shall hardly be able to accomplish it without hurting you. Grete," turning to the little maid, who had quickly put in an appearance upon the return of the carriage, "run to the smith—the young one, you know—and ask him to come and help me."

He threw a copper on the ground, which the little

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one, beaming with joy, picked up before running away.

I felt the blood mount hotly to my cheeks. I should see him again. He would perform the part of a good Samaritan towards me. Pressing my hand to my fluttering heart, I sat and waited until—until——

Yes, that is he! How strong and handsome he has grown! Clustering fair hair waves around his smoke-blackened countenance, and a soft down covers his powerful chin. Thus must young Siegfried have looked when he was apprenticed to the wicked Mime.

He awkwardly lifts the little cap which sits so saucily on the back of his head, but, smilingly, I hold out my hand and ask: "How are you?"

"How should I be? Very well," he answers with an embarrassed laugh, carefully wiping his sooty fingers upon his leathern apron before accepting my proffered hand.

"Help me lift my sister into the carriage," says my brother.

He wipes his hands again and seizes me—not very gently—by the shoulders; my brother lifts my feet, and in a moment I lie safely upon the carriage cushions.

"Thank you! thank you," I cry, nodding at him smilingly.

He stands at the carriage door, turning his cap in his hands in a confused manner, and glancing first at me and then at my brother.

"He has something on his mind," say I to myself. "The sight of me has recalled old memories—he wishes to talk with me of the happy days when we, in childish innocence, herded geese together; but he does not dare in the presence of my brother. I must help him a little."

"Well, of what are you thinking?" I inquire, looking at him in a most friendly and encouraging manner.

My brother, who had been attending to the horses, turns round and glances at him.

"Ah, so you want your *pour-boire*," he says, reaching in his pocket.

I feel as though I had been struck. "For pity's sake, Max," I stammer, turning hot and cold.

My brother does not hear me, however, and hands him—really, he dare!—and hands him a mark!

I imagine I see the friend of my youth throwing the coin in my brother's face. I struggle up and stretch out my hands to prevent trouble, but what do I see? No, it is not possible, and yet—with my own eyes I see him take the money. He says, "Thank you, kindly." He bows—he is gone.

And I? I stare after him as though he were an evil spirit, and then, with a sigh, sink feebly back upon the cushions.

Thus, my friend, I took leave of my childhood's dream.

I expected my old companion to refuse the proffered coin with dignified indignation, but, to my intense surprise and disappointment, he clutched eagerly at it, and put it into his pocket with glib words of thanks. He turned back to the smithy, and I drove away with my brother.

My hero was a hero no longer. It cost me many a pang for a few days, and then I saw the truth of the remark I made at the beginning. There is a difference in the feelings of the two classes. Malcolm Hawse.

The Knowing Birds Read

THE BIG BUDGET.

When the pie was opened the birds began to sing,
The B.B. is a paper fit to set before a king.

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Tonio el Matador.

On the cattle farm where live old Don Antonio, his daughter, Dona Ana, with her husband, Juan Moreno, *el matador de toros*, and their little four-year-old son, Tonio, there is to-day very great rejoicing. To-morrow is the feast day of San Antonio, and there is to be a grand bull fight, at which Juan is to fight two bulls.

Poor Juan had been badly gored over six months ago, and since that time has not been able to do any fighting. He has not been able to make any money. This fact his father-in-law, old Don Antonio, does not let him forget, so Juan is glad that he is to have a chance of stopping the old man's sneers. The old man does not object to looking after his daughter and little Tonio, but he does not care to have Juan about him. And so, when Juan is offered a place in the big fight, he accepts it gladly. As for Dona Ana and Tonio, they are almost out of their heads with delight. Tonio, in his eagerness, betakes himself to the great corral, where he gleefully announces to the assembled peons, and to his own special pet, Diablo, the great black Andalusian bull, who is just his own age, and who loves him devotedly, the great news that to-morrow his own father is to fight two big bulls in the plaza de Toros: that he, Tonio, is to go with mamma, and sit just at the back of the big gate, where he can see it all; that his father is to wear such a lovely costume, all gold and silver and lace, and how glad he is that he is going—how he wishes that he could take all of them, even Diablo!

Poor little Tonio! He does not know, and the peons won't tell him, that El Diablo will be at the bull fight, that he is entered on the bills for the second fight! But not knowing this, Tonio is careful to spend quite a long time with Diablo, giving him sugar, and patting and rubbing his head, appreciating which the great animal affectionately licks the little boy's head and rubs gently against him.

The tremendous bull ring is packed when the three reached it at three o'clock that afternoon. The great patio, or ground floor of the ring, is sanded over, circled all about with the great wooden first barrier. This is where the bulls are fought. And along the top of this high wall are some few seats, where the bull-fighters and their friends and families sit, about twelve or fifteen feet above the ring where the fighting is going on. That is where Dona Ana and little Tonio seat themselves, after kissing their bull-fighter good-bye and wishing him "good-luck." From here they will see everything distinctly, and will not miss a stroke.

And up behind them one tier after another, are the rows of boxes and private seats where the fine people of Mexico sit. Tonio stares at them till his eyes ache.

Now the band begins the first bars of such a lovely swinging Mexican dance that Tonio forgets all about what he will do if the President honours his father, and delightfully watches the bandsmen.

The first bull rushed into the ring—a great brown Atenco beast, with huge curving horns, and hoofs that beat and tear up the ground as he raged on. He has been kept for three days in a dark, close pen, and has been starved all this time so as to make him very furious in the ring. Just as the gate is opened for him to rush through into the ring, a man who is seated above throws down two sharp iron instruments with gay ribbons tied on the ends. The sharp points stick into the bull's flesh and cut him until the blood pours down, so that he roars and bellows with fury, not knowing what it means.

Then Tonio sees his father drop carefully down into the ring, with a red cloth and two "banderillos" (sharp, arrow-like things decorated with ribbons), ready for the bull.

The bull sees Juan, and with his big head lowered until his horns almost sweep the ground, he plunges on. Juan steps forward just a little, and holds out the big red cloak. As he sees it, the bull gives a loud roar that seems to shake the ring, and strikes at the matador with all his might. But Juan steps to one side, and flaps the big cloth right in the animal's face. When the bull, furious and pawing, goes to charge again, he sees that there is another creature with glittering clothes and big red cloth in the ring. So he goes for that, and tries to gore it.

This goes on for some minutes, and then all the cloak men except Juan tumble quickly out of the ring, and two gates open, and three poor bony old horses, blindfolded, are jerked in by their riders, the "picadors." The picadors are bull-fighters who fight on horseback. They have iron on underneath their leather clothes, and carry long wooden lances to worry the bull.

One after the other the bull kills the horses. Tonio hides his head in his mother's lap. The poor *caballos!* How can the people allow them to be so treated?

Now all the people, their taste for blood satisfied, call loudly with many hand clappings for *"Juan! El matador!"* meaning that they want the bull killed.

Now follows the usual trial of skill between man and beast, and the latter is killed by a clever lunge. Poor toro! He has fought a good fight.

Juan Moreno's work has been well done, and all the people cry: "Bravo! Bravo, Juan Moreno!" And down into the ring pour *all sorts of things*—hats,

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flowers from pretty women, cigars, dollars, and purses. The President leans forward, and throws down, smiling, a heavy purse and some of his own good cigars.

And you can imagine how Tonio watches it all, crying from pure joy, with his eyes looking as though they would come out of his head.

Soon the dead bull is dragged out by six gaily decorated mules, and the ring is sanded for the entrance of the second bull.

Everybody is whispering that this is the bull of the day, a fine Andalusian, a beauty! Some wonder if Juan Moreno can handle him. Although the best toreado in all Mexico, Juan has been disabled for a long time, and many people notice that he looks very tired now, as he sits with his wife holding his little son, who has from excitement and joy succumbed to suggestion from the "Land of Nod." Juan climbs down, when the first trumpet blows, to go back to the ring, Dona Ana, vaguely uneasy, takes the little boy in her arms.

Meantime, as Juan Moreno and fully twelve more cloth and banderillo men unsuccessfully cope with the magnificent wild beast that has already gored one man to death, Tonio sleeps peacefully, knowing nothing.

The bull has killed four horses and one man. Every moment his strength, force, and wild fury seem to increase. Bellowing, rushing, pawing and plunging, even the best of the matadors have no chance against him! And this Juan Moreno knows. Worn out and tired from the previous fight, his work gets feebler and feebler; but for his wife and child there, watching him, he would give up and let the bull trample him!

All of a sudden the people who are eagerly, breathlessly watching see the matador stumble. He recovers himself and avoids the bull. But his eyes are failing, and he feels strangely weak. All the blood is rushing to his head. He cannot avoid the bull another time. He sees the raging black charge, and, dropping the sword, tries to say a "Padre Nuestro." A tiny dot of red and gold seems to flash before his eyes, then he sinks helplessly on the ground, amid the roars and screams of 8,000 people. Carelessly he waits for the goring of the bull. It does not come. Then he tries to struggle to his feet. Another wild shout goes up from the many throats. He looks, trying to clear his eyes.

Not ten feet from him is the great bull Diablo, and, reaching up, patting the huge head and horns, and saying many loving Spanish words, is the little son Tonio! Paralysed, helpless, unable to think or breathe, the unhappy bull-fighter stares, unable to take his eyes away. His only little boy, Tonio! But how strangely the wild, mad beast is behaving! Look, actually he is caressing the child's upturned face with his coarse red tongue, all covered with foam as it is! Then poor Juan faints and knows nothing more for many hours!

Tonio has saved his father's life! Waking suddenly, and with no thought of anything but that it was Diablo, his dear playfellow, that men were trying to torture, furious that they should dare to do so, he had leapt down into the ring, and just in time.

You can imagine how the people cheered "the little bull-fighter," as they called him; and not only that, but the President himself sent for and talked to Tonio, and gave him a bill for a hundred dollars, and Mrs. President kissed him, and the audience, not to be outdone, collected among themselves such a sum of money that people say to this day that the biggest fee ever collected in Mexico by a bull-fighter was that given to little *Tonio el matador*.

W. Sheldon.

The MAgnificent March Number of

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CONTENTS:

ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK. (Illustrated.) Amongst the many charming pictures which are reproduced this month are splendid examples of the work of Mr. Solomon J. Solomon, A.R.A., as well as a most amusing picture by M. Pirez, and many others equally as interesting and as entertaining.

MOUNTAINEERING IN ENGLAND. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Austin Fryers. The striking photographs which illustrate this article show that it is quite unnecessary to go to Switzerland to break one's neck in mountaineering. The climbing that can be obtained at home is as perilous and as excellent a test for the nerves as the most courageous and hardy mountaineer could desire.

REAL GHOST STORIES. By E. and H. Heron. No. III.—The Story of the Moor Road. (Illustrated by B. E. Minns.) These ghost stories are causing quite a sensation. Their special interest lies in the fact that they are based on actual occurrences. With each story a photograph is given of the actual spot at which the ghost appeared.

THE WEALTH OF THE WORLD. Written and illustrated by J. Holt Schooling. Here we have presented to us in picturesque form, some most interesting facts about the distribution of the wealth of the world. Mr. J. Holt Schooling, the famous statistician, who is responsible for the article, shows us a photograph of a pile of bank-notes, worth fifteen millions sterling, tells us which are the wealthiest countries of the world, and amongst the many picturesque comparisons he makes is this; if the wealth of the world were converted into gold, it would make a road from Westminster Bridge to Dorking (nearly 24 miles), 18ft. wide and 6in. thick

A CORNER IN LIGHTNING. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By George Griffith. (A very exciting complete story.)

CHANGING SILVER INTO GOLD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Herbert C. Fyfe. This article gives full information about the remarkable discovery which has recently been made by Dr. Emmens. This eminent New York scientist has actually succeeded in converting silver into gold. He is now buying silver which the United States Assay Office has declared to be entirely free from all traces of gold, and this silver he actually converts into a metal which the United States Mint buys from him as gold, and pays him the full gold price for it.

JUST LIKE THE WORLD. (Illustrated by S. Nation.) By Clifton Bingham.

THE DEVIL'S PICTURE-BOOKS. (Illustrated with Examples.) By J. H. Kemmis. Under this title are reproduced a most interesting series of the playing-cards used in different parts of the world. The series includes some very eccentric specimens from India, China, and Japan, as well as the most interesting cards in use in European countries.

THE SACRIFICE OF VENTRIS PERUGINI. (Illustrated by Hana.) By Winifred Graham. (A complete story.)

HOW THE HANDS ARE HELD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By E. Le Breton-Martin. The author of this article has obtained a very striking series of photographs of the most curious attitudes for carrying the hands, which have come under his observation. Some people, for instance, clench their fists when they are walking, others spread their fingers out fan-shape, and others again have a finger only or a thumb projecting. A whole host of interesting examples are given.

A FAIR CONSPIRATOR. (Illustrated by G. G. Manton.) By James Workman. This is a very charming story of the English civil war.

THE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF MR. GLADSTONE. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By W. Arthur Woodward. This is the most complete account that has ever been published of Mr. Gladstone's recreations throughout his long and varied career. Here Mr. Gladstone is presented to us as a cricketer, an oarsman, a football-player, a pedestrian, a sportsman and a singer, besides in the pursuit of many other pastimes almost too numerous to mention. The excellent photographs which are reproduced form a fitting accompaniment to this interesting article.

DA PIETRA'S WAGER. (Illustrated by A. Kemp Tebby.) By H. Ryall. A story.

A RAINY DAY. By J. J. Bell.

ANIMAL ACROBATS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By J. Malcolm Fraser. In this article a description is given of some of the very clever tricks which dogs and cats have been trained to perform, and illustrations are given of some of the most difficult feats. One dog for instance, has been trained to balance itself on one of its fore feet, two others have been trained to box, and another to preserve its equilibrium on a ball which is balanced on a plank running across the arena.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. No. IX.—The Raiding of Donna Clothilde. (Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.) By Cutcliffe Hyne. (A complete story.)

THE DEVIL-MAN. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Merriden Howard. An interview with Mr. Douglas Beaufort who was officially dispatched by the British Government to conciliate the Sultan of Morocco. Mr. Beaufort tells his amusing experiences at the Sultan's Court and explains some of his most clever tricks.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by A. Popini.) By W. L. Alden. This month Mr. Alden criticises in his most amusing manner, the little worries connected with our postal arrangements, with corks, with spectacles, and eye-glasses, and with professional gardeners.

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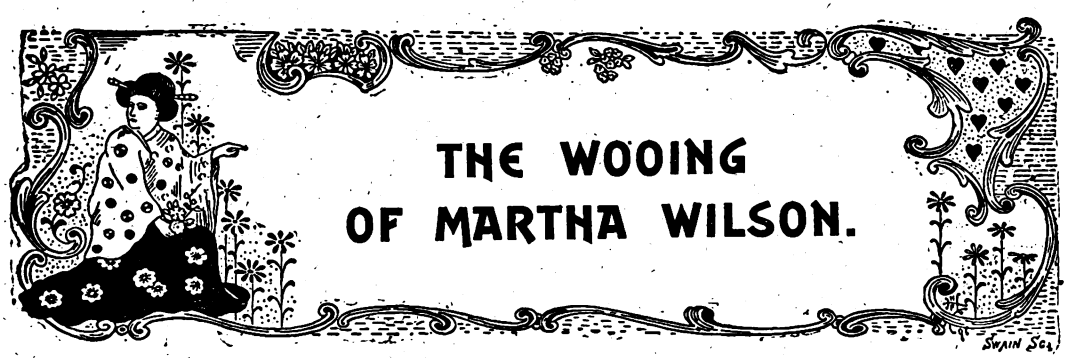

THE WOOING OF MARTHA WILSON.

Anthony Wilson, Esq., of Chester Square, Belgravia, arrived one fine summer afternoon in Relsham, and drove in a specially ordered carriage to the Grand Hotel. He was accompanied by his daughter Martha, and her maid.

Wilson was a retired cattle-dealer, and, unlike many "self-made" men, he was proud of his lowly origin. He had succeeded, by dint of hard work and some timely assistance on the part of Dame Fortune, in accumulating great wealth, and had retired from business to spend it in ease, and to assure for his only daughter the position in society that he coveted for her.

"You won't find that gal's equal anywheres," he would declare earnestly. "She's a perfect daisy, that she is! Ah, if Maria had only lived to see her now she's growed up and able to have the best in the market!"

Martha was certainly an attractive young lady. She possessed a trim, well-rounded figure, really pretty features, a splendid complexion, and an enchanting smile. She had received an excellent education, and moved with ease and grace in such society as her father's money had procured an entrance for her.

Anthony Wilson was a "warm" man, and just a little fond of making the fact known. He had journeyed to Relsham to gratify his daughter's wish to see the flower show, and he was determined to make a stir in the place.

"We'll let things go down 'ere, Pat," he said to his daughter as they drove to the hotel. "We'll make 'em stare, or my name's not Tony!" And he leant back in his seat with a self-satisfied smile.

"I have no doubt we shall pass a very pleasant time, father," answered Martha with a smile. Her father's illiterate style of speech and his ostentatious display of wealth grated upon her finer feelings at times; but he was good to her, he doted upon her, and her affection and gratitude overwhelmed all other sentiments.

There were numerous visitors in Relsham, and Martha Wilson and her father soon became centres of attraction, for different reasons.

It had been dawning upon the retired cattle dealer for some little time that his presence was at times a bar to his daughter's progress, and he determined to keep in the background as much as possible while they were at Relsham.

Martha went for a walk that evening with her maid, a dark-eyed Spanish woman, whom they had engaged during a week's stay at Gibraltar, and Wilson was left to pass the time in the hotel as agreeably as he could. It was his own wish.

There were three persons in the hotel to whom the old man's attention was quickly drawn. He summed them up very quickly, and at once determined to become acquainted with them.

"Them two young fellows over there are aristocrats," he murmured. "Look likely young chaps enough, and just about Pat's age. The tall one suits me best; wonder if he's got a title or likely to have one? I must find out who he is. Then there's that foreigner; he's smart, and I fancied I 'eard the waiter call 'im 'Count.' But," with a shake of the head, "that kind o' cattle are rather awkward to deal in."

Judicious inquiry of a waiter elicited the fact that the Count had been there before, and that he was provided with letters of introduction to some of the magnates of the neighbouring city—in short, he was a real Spanish nobleman.

That settled it. In less than five minutes the retired dealer had accidentally trodden upon the toes of the Count, which led to profuse apologies, and the ordering by Wilson of a bottle of the best wine in the place. The nobleman was most affable, and in a very short space of time the two were talking as though they had known each other for years.

"Yes," said Wilson, "my daughter wanted to come down here to see the show." He spoke loudly, falling into the error so often committed by persons speaking to a foreigner—under the impression that it is necessary to talk in a loud tone in order to be understood. "Clever gal, she is."

"I have noticed the señorita," returned the Spaniard gracefully. "Ah! We have pretty girls in Spain, but your daughter is a—a—Venus, Señor Wilson!"

The old man's face flushed with pleasure and pride.

"Martha is a fine young woman," he stammered, "and she is worth her weight in gold. Takes after her poor mother." Then he added to himself: "He's a perfect gent and mighty civil. I'll fix this up for Pat."

"You will introduce me to her, my good sir?" asked the Count in a persuasive tone.

"She'll be delighted, Count," replied Wilson, turning the title over on his tongue.

The time passed quickly. Wilson did most of the talking, and occasionally succeeded in placing an *h* in its proper place. The Count, whose eyes took in everything, suddenly espied Martha in the garden at the back of the hotel, and at once mentioned the fact. Wilson jumped up and hurried his companion out of the building to be introduced.

The introduction was soon over. The Count, with his graceful bearing and flowery style, made a great impression on Martha; her eyes dropped as they met

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the piercing orbs of the Spaniard, and a peculiar look passed over his features.

At that moment he turned to make a remark to Wilson and his glance fell upon the maid. The sound died away on his lips, the two stared at one another for a second, then the maid quietly walked along the path.

"You have a foreign maid, Miss Wilson?" he queried pleasantly.

"Yes, sinyor," interposed her father. "She is a countrywoman of yours. We engaged her when we were in Gibraltar."

"I thought she came from my beloved country," replied the noble son of Castile. "Ah! It is long since I heard my native tongue—weeks! I should like to speak with the maid—if I might."

"Of course! Call her, Martha."

Angela was called and came forward slowly. The Count spoke to her, and they exchanged a few sentences rapidly in the Catalan dialect, after which the maid bowed and retired.

That night, when the Count went into his room, he locked the door carefully, opened a drawer in the dressing table, and drew from it an elegant pistol, a toy in appearance, but in reality a deadly weapon. He examined it, and then placed it in his breast pocket with a cynical smile.

"Angela used to have a temper—a very bad temper," he muttered in his own tongue. "I expect it has become even worse lately, and it is well to be prepared."

The next day passed without incident. The old man and his daughter went to the show accompanied by the Count; and on their return to the hotel they dined at the same table, together with the two young men already mentioned. The Count was very attentive to Martha, but he was somewhat chagrined to find that he did not make such progress as he anticipated; the tall young man, whose name was Arthur Merstham, was rapidly ingratiating himself with the cattle dealer's pretty daughter and receiving a fair share of her favour.

It was about ten o'clock when the Spaniard bade his new friends good-night. He sauntered out of the hotel, smoking a cigarette, and strolled lazily along the lane close by until he came to a rough seat. He sat down and made himself as comfortable as he could, evidently with the intention of waiting for someone.

He had not long to wait. A light footfall struck his ear and he arose to find himself confronted by Angela.

"Well?" she asked.

"Let us sit down," he said curtly. "We can talk better."

They sat down and the woman lifted her veil. Her face was very white and set, and her eyes glittered angrily; but it was too dark for the other to see all this.

"After we parted," began the man, "I had a letter from you in which you swore to have revenge. You prayed that I might cross your path and so forth. Well, Angela, fate has favoured you and our paths cross."

"Yes," she said, drawing her breath through her set teeth.

"Well, *querida mia*, I suppose you wish to denounce me to the opulent cattle dealer and his daughter? I asked you to wait till to-night and have a talk with me before you decided to begin your revenge. Now, what do you intend to do?"

"I shall not consider your feelings, Esteban."

"I do not ask you to do so, Angela," he retorted. "I ask you to consider yourself. You are in a strange land, working for a living; would you not prefer to have a little house in your native Barcelona, with an assured income?"

"Why do you ask that?" she queried scornfully. "I am not a lady's maid from choice. Why do you say that?"

"If you try to gratify your desire for revenge," proceeded the Count coolly, "you will not even continue to be a lady's maid; my word will be accepted rather than yours, and you will be an outcast; I will see to that! But if you do as I say, the little house and the income will be yours. I shall be able to buy your silence."

"How much?" she asked quietly.

"I will give yon one hundred pounds now—two thousand five hundred pesetas, Angela—and if you help me in my plans you shall share in the profits. You can guess what my plans are. This Wilson is very rich, and I have a fancy to be related to him. It would not surprise you to hear me call him 'father,' eh? No. I like this pretty English girl, and it really is time that I settled down, is it not? My future is assured, whatever you may try to do; but you can help me if you will only study your own interests."

He fancied that he detected a movement of an aggressive nature, and he gripped his pistol. The lynx-like eyes of the woman perceived his action; she knew that he was not a man to stick at trifles, and that she must act accordingly.

"Don't be foolish, Angela," he continued more gently. "You must see that it is better for you to assist me than to try to hinder me. The chances are on my side."

"You speak truly," she said. "I must reflect."

He did not notice anything peculiar in the tone in which she uttered the last sentence; he was too elated at the idea of having again moulded her to his will, as he had so often done in the past. He drew her closer to him, and spoke in the tender manner which he knew so well how to assume.

"What do you want me to do, Esteban?"

"That is my own Angela once more!" he cried, drawing her face to his and kissing her. "What fools these women are!" was his mental observation. But he said aloud: "Listen, sweet, and you will learn how you can help me."

After that interview, the Count's wooing progressed apace. Martha ceased to bestow any attention upon Merstham, who appeared to accept his discomfort with manly dignity, and ceased to dine at the same table.

The flower show was over, but there were various functions to keep the visitors in Relsham—the last being a ball.

The Count and Angela had several interviews, at which she seemed sullen, but ready to do his bidding. That was all he wanted; had she been more agreeable he would have suspected her sincerity.

Three days before the ball, the Count asked Wilson for permisson to sue for the hand of his daughter. The "merchant prince" (as the Spaniard called him—to his face) was delighted, and then and there stated his intention of settling a quarter of a million on Martha on the day she became the Countess of Villanova. "Countess"! The old man rolled the title on his tongue, Martha a Countess! He could scarcely realise it.

Martha herself received the proposal with favour and becoming modesty; but she asked for time to consider, and promised to give him an answer on the evening of

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the ball. He would have liked to draw her to his breast and caress her—as he had done to Angela—but there was something about this pretty English girl which prevented him from making the attempt.

"All the sweeter when it comes," he murmured. "It will not be long now, and I know how to wait."

Great preparations had been made for the ball. Mr. Anthony Wilson had made up his mind that his brilliant stay should have a brilliant finish, and had placed a large sum at the disposal of his daughter for "trimmings." Martha's dress was simple compared with his notion of what it should be, but the material was the best that money could purchase.

The ball was a grand success; Relsham thought those who took part in it would talk about it for many a day.

The Count waited impatiently for the interval, when he was to receive his answer. But when the interval arrived Martha was not to be seen. The Count was perplexed, and Wilson equally so. The Spaniard, wandering about in search of her, became conscious of the fact that Merstham had also disappeared, and began to feel uneasy. He was about to return to the ball-room—the interval was nearly over—when Mr. Yorke, Merstham's friend, came towards him.

"If you will come with me, Count," he said politely, "I can take you to someone who is anxious to see you before the dancing begins again."

The Count looked surprised, but intimated his willingness to accompany Yorke. "Those cold English girls are strange," he murmured. "Ah, there is more in a Spaniard, but the money is wanting."

Yorke conducted him towards a room in which the Count could see a number of gentleman. As they approached the door, the Count saw Merstham coming to meet him.

"I have been requested to introduce you to a lady, Count," he said. "A lady who has something to tell you."

The Spaniard glanced about him in bewilderment. Decidedly, the English girls were strange! Did they usually accept a proposal of marriage before a number of gentlemen witnesses? He noticed that the countenances of those present wore an expectant look. He was about to speak when a hand was placed upon his shoulder; he turned quickly, and found himself confronted by Angela.

"*You?*" he cried, forgetting himself in his surprise and confusion.

She was dressed in ball costume, and carried a fan in an easy, but indolent manner. Her face was pale, but her eyes gleamed with hate.

"Yes, Conde de Villanova," she said in steady, determined tones. "I have had you brought here to hold you up to the ridicule and contempt of those who have believed you to be a gentleman. You used me as a toy in Madrid, and when you threw me aside I swore to have revenge. You thought that you had won me over to assist you in your wicked design to obtain the hand of Miss Wilson. You wanted her father's money. You offered me a share. But I am not so bad as that! You had your little plot; I had mine. I have been successful; you have failed. Miss Wilson knows all. This is my revenge. I denounce you in front of all these honourable Englishmen as a—as a cowardly villain! I brand you as a scoundrel unfit for the society of men and women, and I do it publicly like this because you dare not deny it. You have betrayed yourself in your surprise, as I thought you would. In private your word would have been accepted before mine."

The short sentences, spoken with a pretty accent and in a tone that indicated deadly determination, spread wonder and indignation among the gentlemen. The Count, hardened rascal as he was, cowered beneath her words like a whipped hound. Not until she had finished speaking did he appear to recover some of his self possession, but one look convinced him that he was condemned. He glared at her as though he would strangle her; then he slunk away amidst the murmurs of the spectators.

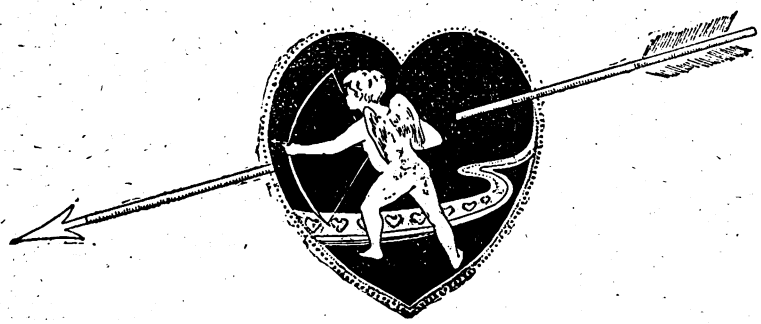
The affair created a tremendous sensation. The Spaniard left Relsham early the next morning, and left for France on the following day. He never dared show his face in English society again.

The plot had been arranged by Angela with the assistance of Merstham. Martha had been told by her maid of the Count's true character, and that it would be exposed, and she had lent herself to the plot to the extent of deceiving the Count as to her real feelings. But she had not known the exact nature of the plot.

Wilson's exasperation had a little disappointment mixed with it—at the loss of a title. But that was quickly dissipated by the announcement that Merstham was a suitor for Martha's hand, and that he was the nephew and prospective heir of the Earl of Helmsdale.

Angela has her house and an assured income in a pretty seaside town in the south of England.

G. E. Lingen.



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THE GOLD MAGNET.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLII.

Madame Sybil Shoots.

The Maxims got their work in so quickly that the only reply from the deck of the gold-ship was a scattered, ineffectual volley, which merely resulted in the wounding of two or three of the *Minnehaha's* crew.

"We may as well go on now we've begun," said Lorrain. "Clear the decks, and then we'll board. We must have that coal at any price."

"Right, Seenyor. Just my idea!" replied the skipper.

And so the murderous work went on for two or three minutes longer. Then the bullet-storm ceased, and the yacht ran up close alongside the *State of Oregon*, which was still driving ahead at her best speed. As the sides touched half-a-dozen men sprang on board with ropes to lash them fast, and a dozen others armed with revolvers and short bayonet-swords sprang over the rail on to the blood-stained deck.

Captain Peters' idea was not to stop to take the coal out in the dangerous waters of the Strait, but to run the two steamers out towards the open sea and fill his bunkers as they went along. The remainder of the crew and passengers of the *State of Oregon* were therefore kept below by sentries placed over the companion-ways, and the stokers and engineers were promised their lives and the ship when the pirates had done with her if they would keep at work till the coal was transferred. If they refused they were to be shot, and their places supplied by men from the *Minnehaha*.

They naturally took the one chance of safety, however slender it was, and went on with their work. Meanwhile the heads of the two vessels were turned westward, and as they steamed along side by side the bunkers were thrown open, the derricks and donkey-engines were set to work, and all available hands were soon busily engaged in transferring the precious fuel from the gold-ship to her captor.

They travelled slowly, as twelve knots was the very best that could be got out of the American steamer's engines; but they ploughed steadily along for over an hour towards Dixon's Entrance, and Captain Peters and Lorrain were congratulating themselves on their smartness and success in getting out of what might have been a very tight place, when suddenly, right ahead, the white gleams of three searchlights, one of which was a good deal higher up than the other two, flashed out of the misty distance and began to sweep to and fro in wide circles over the grey, smooth water.

"Caught, by the great Snake!" said Captain Peters, with a gasp which ended in a snort of disgust. "There's no way out for us there, Seenyor. Stop that coaling, come aboard, all of you, and cast off. Get a wriggle on you, now! Cæsar's ghost, they're coming up pretty slick! Those low lights belong to a couple of destroyers, and I shouldn't wonder if that middle one isn't our old friend the *Pocahontas*. Ready with those after guns there! Never mind casting off them ropes, cut 'em!"

The little skipper issued his orders with a rapidity which showed how serious the situation seemed to him. Lorrain jumped down from the bridge and made a hurried inspection of the guns and ammunition, and gave strict orders that not a shot was to be fired or a light shown as long as there was a chance of escaping unseen.

The *Minnehaha* was clear of the *State of Oregon* in a few minutes, but short as the delay was, it was already too long. A beam from the centre search-light struck her just as she was edging away under cover of the gold-ship's hull. The next instant the report of a cannon boomed out, and a projectile splashed into the water a couple of hundred yards ahead of her. Lorrain was standing near one of the after dynamite guns when this happened. Inspired by a sudden thought he sprang to it, and with his own hand turned it on to the water-line of the *State of Oregon*, took deliberate aim, and fired. The dynamite exploded just under the quarter, and ripped a great gaping hole in the thin plating. The stricken vessel shuddered and lurched heavily over.

"It's a pity to send so much good coal and gold to the bottom," he said as he rejoined Captain Peters on the bridge, "but that'll keep them busy for half-an-hour or so. They won't come past her without saving what we've left of her people. How much did you get out of her, Captain?"

"About thirty tons I reckon, and I believe seven or eight casks of petroleum. That'll keep the oil-blast going for about twelve hours, so if that isn't the *Pocahontas* we shall get away all right. If it is we're going to have a darned tight squeeze."

"How much is she making now?" asked Lorrain a trifle anxiously.

"A bit over thirty, Seenyor, and I'm afraid that's her absolute best. Her bottom's as foul as a homeward-bound whaler's. If we get over the other side we'll have to dock her somewhere and have a clean up. Ay, look yonder, that was a good idea of yours. See, they're stopping to investigate. Now they'll know who we are if they weren't sure before. Waal, if that ain't one of the darnedest misfortunes that ever came my way I'll give up pirating and start a dry-goods store—there's the moon, and there's the wind from the land! Now you'll see this mist go like a cloud of steam on a hot day. I reckon they won't want them search-lights much longer."

Lorrain looked up and saw the full moon rising over the wooded slopes of the main-land. He ground out a muttered series of Anglo-Spanish oaths and went down on deck to meet her ladyship and Madame Sybil, who had just come

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up from the saloon. He told them in a few words what had happened and then Madame Sybil, saying that she had forgotten her shawl, left them and went below again. When she came back she had a light, fleecy woollen shawl doubled round her neck, and in the side pocket of her neatly-fitting ulster was a very business-like little five-chambered Smith-Wesson revolver. There was also a look in her eyes which would have told a close observer that she had not brought the pistol with her for nothing.

The *Minnehaha* was now spinning along at her best possible speed southward. The *Quail* was standing by the disabled steamer, and the *Pocahontas* and the *Mallard* had taken up the chase again at the best sea-speed of the latter, which was about thirty knots. If anything the *Minnehaha* was doing slightly better than her pursuers, and Captain Peters was beginning to hope that if the fuel only held out they would get away after all, at any rate for the time being, when to his utter disgust a searchlight flashed up from the southward and waved to and fro in a quick, jerky fashion, evidently making a signal.

"I reckon the skipper of that hooker was right when he said that the squadron was down south," he said with a strange calmness which had succeeded his anger and flurry. "Anyhow there are war-ships down there and we're between two fires. I reckon it's a case of running the gauntlet again, so we may as well make the best rush we can for it."

"I suppose you haven't forgotten, Captain, that there's a channel between the two islands?" said the second officer, who was steering in the wheel-house. "We ought to be just off it now. It's a bit risky, even for us, but I think we could get through, and if we could, nothing but one of those small craft could follow us."

"Mr. Lennox," said the skipper in a much more genial tone than he usually used to his subordinates, "I guess you've gone pretty near to saving the ship. If we get through, that suggestion shall be worth something to you. Put her round and let's find it right away. D'you happen to know the channel?"

"I've been through once on a yachting trip, Captain," he replied. "It was a smaller craft than this, but I think I can put this one through too."

"Go ahead then," said the skipper. "Anyhow, the rocks won't shoot at us, and they won't hurt us if we don't hit them first."

"Confound the fellow!" Tristam was saying to Courtland almost at the same moment on the navigating bridge of the *Pocahontas*. "Confound him, he's going to try for the channel. Well, it's a pretty plucky thing to do. Captain Markham, do you think we can get through there?"

The captain shook his head as he replied:

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Tristam, at least not at this speed.

"I could take the ship through if it were absolutely necessary, taking soundings and all that sort of thing, but I expect he'll go through pretty nearly at full speed, as it's neck or nothing with him. I must say that I think he's made the best choice. He has more chance of getting through there than he was of getting through the squadron without getting sunk."

"Well then," said Courtland, "I reckon the best thing we can do is to let the *Mallard* go in first and follow her as fast as we can, so as to give her the cover of the guns. We can't stick at a bit of danger, you know, Captain; we're going to see this through somehow, and if the *Pocahontas* can get into that channel she's going into it. You do all you can and leave the responsibility to me. What do you say, Tristam?"

"If the ship were mine I suppose I should do the same," said Tristam shortly.

"Of course you would," said Courtland. "Let her go, Captain, give her full speed, every yard you've got, and see if you can't cut that little scoundrel off before he gets in. That'll be better than following her. I should think the Commander might try a shot or two at him as we go across. I'll go and see him."

The course of the *Pocahontas* altered as her speed increased, and the *Mallard* followed her, making a gallant struggle, but not entirely successful to keep up. The cruiser-yacht now began to gain perceptibly on the *Minnehaha*, and presently little black shapes surmounted by flaming funnels became visible to the southward, and behind them bigger shapes vomiting volumes of black smoke up into the moonlit air. There were three destroyers now on the heels of the flying *Minnchaha*, and they were racing after her like dogs after their quarry. But the land was getting very near now, and a dim opening appeared between the two tree-clad shores, which were rising as if by magic up out of the water. It was terribly risky work, rushing at railway speed into the mouth of a narrow, almost unknown channel, but there were worse risks behind, and so Captain Peters, standing by the wheel-house ready to give his second officer at the wheel his bearings, held on to every knot that the panting boilers and grinding engines of the *Minnehaha* could give him.

The smaller guns of her pursuers soon began to spit fire and smoke at her as they closed in. The big guns were not to be used except in the last necessity, not out of consideration for those on board the pirate, but on account of that priceless little item of her cargo which the explosion of a hundred pound shell on board her might lose beyond all hope of finding. The object was to cripple her with the lighter shot if possible, and then take her by boarding, and so recover both her golden plunder and the Gold Magnet itself.

Captain Peters was not slow in replying with his after dynamite guns and the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt. But the practice was not very good on either side in the faint, baffling light, and before any great harm had been done the *Minnehaha* had dashed into the entrance and swung round out of sight behind a point of rock.

At the same moment her search-light flashed out ahead, and a broad fan of white radiance illuminated the narrow, winding channel and the black, wicked-looking little rocks for several hundred yards ahead of her. The skipper, all eyes and nerves, stood in front of the wheel-house ready to give Lennox his course by voice and signal. Madame Sybil was just inside sheltering from the wind, and Lorrain was standing at the star-board end of the bridge smoking a cigar and discussing the chances of escape with her ladyship.

The three destroyers *Virago*, *Vulture* and *Mallard* raced neck and neck for the opening close followed by the *Pocahontas*, which, having failed to cut off the *Minnehaha*, had slowed down a little to let the smaller craft show her the way. The *Mallard* slipped round the point first, just in time to see the chase disappear for the second time round a pine-crowned bluff. The three boats steamed round after her and caught a glimpse of her about a mile ahead, still spinning along with reckless desperation through the rock-strewn waters of the channel, and so for nearly two hours the chase went on, both pursuers and pursued escaping the rocks and banks almost by miracles as they swept past them at a head-long speed, exchanging shots every now and then as they came in sight of each other, but, as far as could be seen, doing no damage on either side.

"Shouldn't wonder if we fooled 'em yet," said Captain Peters, in a brief interval between his constant "Port—starboard—steady a bit—now port again—steady—hold her up!" which had been going on without intermission since they had entered the channel. "Ah! there's the sea at last, and a mighty ugly corner to turn. By Gosh, there's going to be a scrape there! Hold her up, Lennox, and stand by to put her hard over when you get the word. If you let a spoke go you'll smash her."

Dead ahead was a high bluff, with a long black tongue of rock stretching out about half a mile from it. Off the opposite shore was a low, rocky island, which almost met it, and nearer in was another island, which left only a narrow

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streak of water between itself and the shore, and this streak made a sharp curve that was almost a semi-circle, and the only way to freedom was round this and past the point. Not only her ladyship and Madame Sybil, but every man on deck stared at this perilous passage in breathless suspense as the *Minnehaha* rushed into it.

"Ready now, Lennox! Starboard a bit—now—a bit more—steady—that's nicely—a bit more—more—stand by to shove her round—let go—now port—hard over—hard, I say, *hard* and we're round!"

Bang!

"Good Heavens, what was that!"

Just as the *Minnehaha's* bow was about to swing round the rocky point in obedience to her helm, the report of a pistol rang out in the wheel-house, and a few whiffs of smoke drifted out of the door. Lennox, who had dragged the wheel over, hanging on to it with all his weight, let go, and collapsed in a heap under it with a bullet hole in the back of his head. The wheel sprang back, and the *Minnehaha* seemed to shake her head like a horse released from the rein, and dashed straight at the rocks. Captain Peters instinctively sprang to the engine-telegraph, but before he had put the handle over there was a sharp, grinding, ripping crash. Everyone on deck was hurled prone in an instant, the whirling screws flung out torrents of foam from the stern, but the little *Minnehaha* would never move again. She had run her last race and almost won, and there, within a few yards of freedom, she was lying helpless, with a fourth of her length out of the water, fast-wedged in the grip of the rocks.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Magnet Comes Back.

The moment Captain Peters picked himself up he made a rush for the wheelhouse. Madame Sybil was lying on the floor with a pistol in her hand.

"So it was you, was it!" he shouted.

She jerked herself up to a half-sitting position, shot one brief glance at him out of her eyes blazing with hate and loathing, and laughed shrilly:

"Yes, I did it, and I'm glad. You have killed my son and made my life a wreck. Now die yourself!"

She put the revolver up and fired at him, but she made the usual mistake, and although he was not two yards from her and she aimed, as she thought, at his chest, the bullet flew high, knocked his cap off and gashed his scalp. Still it staggered him. The next moment, just as Lorrain ran forward to catch him as he reeled back, there was a sharp, shrill report on the lower deck, followed by an explosion which shook the already sorely-stricken ship from stern to funnel. The *Mallard* had rounded the last bend and sent a twelve-pounder shell into the deck-cabin. Another from the *Vulture* hit her close by the stern-post, and smashed her starboard propeller, besides tearing a great hole in her plates, into which the water immediately began to rush.

"We are not going to lie here to be smashed to bits like a log," said Lorrain between his clenched teeth. "Let that woman alone, Peters. She can't get away. We'll take a gun apiece, and go to Kingdom Come in good company."

He had tied his handkerchief round the skipper's head while he was saying this, and given him a good drink of brandy out of his flask, which happened to be in his overcoat pocket. Captain Peters was just the man to die fighting, and the idea agreed perfectly with his mood.

"Right you are, Seenyor," he said. "We've got to pass in our checks, but I reckon the hand is not played out yet. Come on!"

Lorrain helped him down off the bridge on to the upper deck. The two mid-ship dynamite guns were uninjured, and the slope of the deck gave them a good elevation. The ammunition was all ready by them, but the men were running about in something like panic, wondering what to do and doing nothing. Lorrain's clear, steady voice, and his perfect habit of command instantly brought them back to their senses.

"Come along, boys!" he shouted. "We're not going to be hit without hitting back, and if we've got to go under we won't go alone. Get to your stations and give them every gun you can fire—Maxims and all."

The men rallied instantly from panic to the grim desperation of despair. They knew that to be caught was to be hanged, and naturally they preferred to die fighting. There were no cowards among them, for the simple reason that Captain Peters had shot with his own hand every man who on any occasion had showed the white feather. Three dynamite guns, the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt, and two Maxims were immediately manned, and before the *Mallard* and the *Vulture* had reached the narrow bend, through which only one of them could come at once, the crippled *Minnehaha*, like a wolf at bay, was proving in terrible earnest that she could still bite.

The men at the guns worked as they had never worked before, and within the next terrible minute the dynamite guns had fired thirty rounds, and the machine guns had poured out a hurricane of projectiles. Half a dozen of the dynamite shells had struck the *Mallard* in the first few seconds, and within forty seconds her boilers had blown up, and she had gone to the bottom a shattered wreck.

The *Virago* steamed gallantly on, firing her twelve and three-pounders as fast as they could be worked, but a few moments later she too met the same fate. A dynamite shell dropped on the engine-hatch, burst as dynamite always does, downwards, wrecked her engines, and killed every man in the engine-room. Almost simultaneously another hit her conning-tower, wrecking it completely, and disabling the twelve-pounder gun on top of it. Another and another struck her in quick succession, and a hail of three-pound shells and Maxim-bullets swept along her deck, and by the time the way on her had carried her a hundred yards past the post where the *Mallard* had disappeared, she rolled over with a great gap in her side and began to settle down.

"There goes two of them!" yelled Captain Peters, who by this time was half mad with the lust of slaughter. "There comes the *Pocahontas*. Blaze away, Seenyor! Let 'em have it, boys! Put some sudden death into 'em! Hooray for us, who's fond of flame!"

Just then a jet of white smoke mingled with flame leapt over the bows of the *Pocahontas*, which had just rounded the bluff, and the deep, dull bang of a big gun burst through the chorus of the smaller artillery. A hundred-pound six-inch shell came screaming through the air and crashed into the *Minnehaha's* stern. The next instant her after-deck burst up and her sides bulged out. A charge of dynamite, which was just being put into the skipper's gun exploded with the shock, and literally blew him and his gun's crew to fragments. And so Captain Hiram Peters had his wish and died fighting.

Lorrain's gun was disabled at the same moment, and he himself was hurled, stunned and bleeding, across what remained of the deck. The *Pocahontas* came on, slowing working her way into the narrow channel, and keeping up an incessant fire with her lighter guns, but before she had got half way, the fire from the *Minnehaha* stopped, and the once terrible little craft lay silent and harmless, a blackened, shattered wreck, across the narrow reef on which Madame Sybil's pistol-shot had flung her.

But meanwhile another portion of the tragedy of the Gold Magnet was being played out under the smoke-cloud that hung over her ruins. When the cannonade began Madame Sybil and her ladyship were both still on the bridge. Her ladyship came to the door of the wheel-house and, for a moment the two women stared at each other deafened and paralysed by the roar of the guns and the shock of the bursting shells.

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Both were white to the lips, and both were shivering with uncontrollable physical terror. Sybil still had the revolver in her hand, and Jessie's eyes wandered to it, and then to the dead man under the wheel. She shrank back as though to get behind the wood-work of the wheel-house, and then Sybil took a step towards her and said in a high, shrill voice, which sounded strangely through the din of the guns:

"You needn't be afraid—Lady Pendril, as you thought yourself. I'm not going to kill you although you killed my son. I want us both to get away alive from here. I want to see you taken to England and tried as a thief and a murderess, and I want to read about your being hanged. But first of all I want to see them make you give up that thing you find gold with, the thing that you have committed all these crimes for—*you*, a servant girl, who wanted to be a lady and made yourself a felon!"

She almost screamed these last words in Jessie's ear. It was thus that Jessie learnt for the first time that Sybil knew of her possession of the Gold Magnet. Sybil's face was close to hers. All its beauty was gone, and for the moment it looked horrible in its white passion. She didn't answer in words, for no words came to her to say, but she raised both her hands and clenched them and struck blindly and savagely at the livid face and great glaring eyes. Sybil reeled back with a scream of rage, and levelled the revolver at her, but before she could fire it a shell from the *Pocahontas* struck the wheel-house and burst. Jessie remembered seeing a great splash of blood where Sybil's face had been, and then everything went dark and the roar of guns faded away into silence.

About ten minutes later a boat from the *Pocahontas* pulled up to the reef alongside the silent wreck of the *Minnehaha*, and Tristam and Courtland, with half a dozen sailors, climbed up on to what was left of her deck. There was not a man on board who was able to stand on his feet. Men dead and dying, maimed and mangled, lay about among the smashed wood-work and broken, twisted iron in horrible confusion. Here and there a few were groaning and moving feebly in their agony, but these were the only signs of life.

"Good Heavens!" said Courtland as they got up to what had once been the upper deck. "What awful work! I reckon this will be about all the pirate-hunting I shall want. Well, those guns of ours seemed to have saved the hangman a good many jobs. I wonder where the women are. I hope we haven't killed *them*."

"I hope not!" said Tristam as he picked his way across the broken, slippery deck. "Hullo, there's Lorrain! I wonder if he's alive."

Lorrain's body was lying along the deck among the fragments of the funnel. His face was greyish white, his eyes were closed; there was a deep gash across his temple, and his left arm was lying in a position that showed it must be broken. Tristam went and raised his head, and Courtland took out his flask and unscrewed the stopper.

"Try him with a drop of this," he said. "I should like to take one or two of them back with us."

Tristam took the flask and put the mouth of it between Lorrain's teeth. As the brandy trickled into his mouth he coughed and opened his eyes. He drank some more automatically, and then he sat up blinking about him and murmured in Spanish:

"Patricia, have I avenged thee at last?"

Tristam started as he caught the words, and then he said sharply but not angrily:

"It's time you forgot that, Lorrain. There never was anything to avenge, and you've something else to think about now. You're our prisoner. Do you know if there's anyone else alive on board? Where are the women?"

"Oh it's you, is it, it's you!" said Lorrain, looking round with a dull stare at him and trying to struggle to his feet. "Your prisoner, eh—then I've not avenged her! Confound you!"

"I think you'd better let up on that sort of talk, Mr. Lorrain," said Courtland. "I guess there'll be some other people wanting revenge when we come to think about that. Give him a hoist up, Tristam, and let's see if he can stand."

They pulled him up to his feet, his left arm hanging limply by his side, and as they did so the dull stare in his eyes gave place to a glare of hate as he looked round and saw the fearful ruin of what had once been his ship. He walked a few steps with them unresistingly, then his eyes fell upon an unexploded dynamite cartridge lying near the fragments of one of the guns.

The sudden hope of revenge even now gave him new strength. He shook himself free, ran towards it and picked it up. Then he turned with it raised above his head, and was just about to fling it to the deck when Courtland, who was nearest to him, jumped at him, caught his hand just as it was coming down, wrenched the cartridge away from him and tossed it into the water. It was all done in an instant, almost automatically, and before either of them had actually realised how deadly a peril they had been in. The next moment Lorrain stood pinioned between them, gnashing his teeth and cursing with true Spanish-American energy.

Tristam looked at Courtland and said shortly:

"Thanks, old man!"

And Courtland replied: "Just luck—and we're only quits now."

Then a couple of the men came running up and Tristam said to one of them:

"Here, Roberts, this is Mr. Lorrain himself. Tie him up and take him to the boat. Don't let him move on any account."

The two sailors picked up their prisoner with scant regard for his broken arm or his struggles to get free, lashed his right arm to his side, and hurried him off to the boat. Just then another man who had mounted the wreck of the bridge called to Tristam, and they went up and found Jessie and Sybil lying among the ruins of the wheel-house. Sybil was dead and horribly mangled by the splinters of wood and fragments of the shell, but Jessie showed signs of life, though one side of her face was terribly bruised and disfigured, and there was a long, deep cut on the side of her head above her right ear. Courtland's flask came into immediate requisition again, and when they had lifted her out of the debris she coughed and sighed and opened her eyes.

As he picked her up in his arms to take her to the boat, Tristam's thoughts involuntarily went back to the last time he had seen her, at the house in Gower Street in her trim black and white costume and her neat little mob cap. That was really only a few months ago, yet how many years had she lived between that scene and this! When he laid her down gently in the stern-sheets of the boat where Lorrain was already sitting, bound and in sullen silence, she looked up at him and said in her old pretty, gentle voice:

"Thank you, Mr. Tristam! It is very kind of you, but I suppose you are only taking me away to prison?"

"Don't talk about that," he said. "At present you are going on board the *Pocahontas* to be nursed. You'll find Mrs. Tristam there and someone else you know."

"Oh yes, Miss Gwynneth I suppose!" she said, and then her eyes closed and her wounded head sank back on the cushion that he had put under it.

He gave orders for the boat to return at once to the *Pocahontas*, as another one was just reaching the wreck. Then the search for the wounded went on, but out of the whole company of the *Minnehaha* only eight men were carried away with any life in them. When some of the search-party got down into the engine-room they found a man's body lying terribly mangled and scalded among the broken machinery. It was all that was left of Bayard P. Skinner. The shock of striking the rock had flung him down into his beloved engines, and he and they had died together, as no doubt he would have wished to do.

When Tristam got back on board the *Pocahontas* Muriel

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came to meet him at the top of the side-ladder. She took him by the arm and led him away to a deserted part of the deck. Then she opened her hand and showed him a thin, shining strip of metal with a glittering, diamond-like point.

"What do you think that is?" she said.

"Great heavens!—not the Gold Magnet surely?" he said, taking her hand and looking at it. "How in the name of all that's fortunate ——."

"Yes, it is," she interrupted. "The real, veritable Gold Magnet, my own inheritance, my own father's work, come back to me at last, thanks to you."

"And Courtland," he added. "But how did you get—where did you find it?"

"It was in Jessie's hair!" she said. "I believe the poor little wretch carried it there all the time we were looking for it. Gwynneth and I were dressing the wound in her head, you know, and we had to undo her hair and cut some of it off, and there, buried in the plaits, we found this."

"Well," he said, drawing her out of sight behind the shield of a gun, "it's only right that I should be the first to congratulate you on coming into your lawful inheritance. Allow me also to have the honour of kissing the richest as well as the dearest woman in the world!"

There is little more to add to the present portion of the history of the Gold Magnet. Only Lorrain and three of the wounded pirates reached Victoria alive, and there, after due trial, they were justly hanged by the neck until they were dead. Lorrain walked to the scaffold with as little apparent concern as he had strolled up and down the deck of the *Minnehaha* chatting to her ladyship, and died with a gameness worthy of a better end.

Jessie recovered her physical health, but it was soon found that the injury to her head had affected her brain, and when she was placed on her trial as a matter of form, she was found incapable of pleading, and was sent to spend the rest of her days in the criminal asylum, where she passed most of her waking life in walking about the wards or the garden, with a piece of straw tied to a thread, and whispering to everyone she met about the untold treasures that were hidden under the floors and in the ground.

The fifty tons of gold were recovered from the wreck of the *Minnehaha*. What was left of her remained lying rusting and rotting away on the reef which she had so nearly passed to freedom. The gold, as far as possible, was traced to the relatives of its original owners, and handed over to them. Out of the rest the widows and children of the officers and men who had gone down in the destroyers were generously provided for. Naturally neither Tristam or Courtland claimed salvage as they might have done, for after all, what was the value of a few hundredweights of gold to them, now that they had regained the lost key to all the world's hidden treasure?

Here, then, for the present, the story of the Gold Magnet ends. Of the wonders that it wrought in the hands of its new and lawful possessors there will perhaps be more to tell another time.

The End.

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After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

Deer Rectory, Mintlaw, Aberdeen,
From Rev. J. H. Burn. November 8th, 1897.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. **KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.**

If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

We want one clean and perfect copy of each of the following numbers of *Short Stories*: 14, 16, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 87, 88, 91, 124, 127 (two copies), 128, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 153, 154 (two copies), 215, 218, 233, 235 (two copies), and will pay sixpence for each of them. Copies should be addressed to the Publisher.

M. N.—Taken bulk for bulk, a man is stronger than an ox.

U. R.—I am afraid you would have great difficulty in obtaining a really good specimen of the Damascus sword, for the art of working and engraving this kind of steel is dead. These swords were made of alternate layers of iron and steel, so finely tempered, that the blade would bend to the hilt without breaking. The edges of these weapons were so keen that no coat of mail could resist them, and the surfaces so highly polished that when a Moslem wished to rearrange his turban he used his sword as a looking-glass.

A. L.—Rice-paper is not made from rice, but from the membranes of the bread-fruit tree.

D. S. M. sends me a post-card bearing the question: "How fast can a man wink?"———By a recent experiment it was proved that a rapid wink occupies about the sixth of a second.

G. G. asks: "Why should a red sunset foretell dry weather?"———Because it indicates that the air towards the west, from which quarter rain may generally be expected, contains little moisture.

Gardener.—You may be surprised to hear that there is a creature even more tenacious of life than the earth-worm, and that is the common sea polyp. If one be cut in two, two creatures are the result; in fact, if it was divided into half-a-dozen sections, the result would be as many animals. They may be turned inside out, and will apparently enjoy themselves as much as if nothing had happened. If two be divided, and placed end to end, the result will be a monster having a head at each extremity.

W. N.—Perhaps your doctor's bill was a bit exorbitant, but you must remember that you are remunerating him not merely for the time occupied in considering your particular case, but for the years of study it cost him to qualify himself to give an opinion.

W. W.—The last time the Tower of London was used as a state prison was in 1820, when the Cato Street conspirators were confined there. You are quite wrong in asserting that "that venerable pile is now no more than a historic relic." It provides accommodation for a whole regiment of soldiers, and is a store for arms.

Guy.—White and yellow are the most frequently recurring colours in precious stones, and the most infrequent is red, which is confined to rubies and garnets.

G. H.—So far as I know only one Englishman has ever been presented by the Chinese Government with the Order of the Yellow Jacket, and that was General Gordon. This distinction was the reward given him for his services in putting down the rising of the Taipings.

Mudlark asks: "How is it that some people can walk through the dirtiest streets and yet scarcely soil their boots, while others, going the same distance, will get their foot-gear splashed with mud from top to bottom?"———Because some people pay a greater amount of care and attention to the way in which they put their feet down, of course. Naturally, a man who walks on a wet day, regardless of puddles, and with no more care than he would if the streets were perfectly clean, cannot expect his boots to be as immaculate as those of the pedestrian who carefully picks his way.

C. H.—You could not do better than choose chrysanthemums for the occasion you mention, for they live longer after being cut than any other flower.

C. G.—Most of the European nations have their nicknames, appropriate and otherwise. British sailors call the Frenchman, in contempt, Johnny Crapaud, but in France he is Jacques Bonhomme. Cousin Michel is the name by which the German is known to the Continental nations. Mynheer sums up the Dutch, Don Whiskerandos the Spaniard, and Lazzaroni the Italian.

H. K. writes to say that in novels he has often come across descriptions of people possessing green eyes, but that he has never yet met anyone in real life with eyes of this colour, and he, therefore, has begun to believe they exist only in the imagination of writers.———Your doubts are quite justifiable, for, strictly speaking, there are none such. There are certain eyes, however, of the iridescent order, which show changing lights and shadows and some sea-green tints, and it is these colour suggestions that have given rise to the popular idea of green eyes.

Sylvia.—It was certainly very "bad form" on your part to dance twice running with the same gentleman. Of course, if he were your *fiancé* it would have been a different matter altogether. Engaged couples may dance together as often as they like.

W. M.—The quivering of the aspen leaf is said to be due to the fact that the leaf stalk is flat on the sides, and so thin about the middle that the slightest breath of wind sets all the leaves wagging horizontally.

U. R.—It is the bell in Westminster tower, not the clock, that is called "Big Ben."

Cautious wants to know if it would be within the bounds of prudence for a man to escort his recent partner at a dance to her carriage upon her departure, or whether she would be likely to think he had further "intentions."———You certainly might safely conduct the lady to her carriage, and, indeed, would not be more than ordinarily polite in so doing. You might even go a little farther, if you wished, namely, see that her wraps were adjusted properly, and should she be gracious in her manner toward you, you might even ask permission to call the next day.

Pedro is evidently another cautious reader, for he wants to know if it is true that kissing is against the laws of health.———I really cannot give a definite answer to this question. The opinions of the highest authorities differ so widely about it—some say that disease lurks in a kiss, while, on the contrary, others declare that, far from being harmful, kissing is most beneficial and "provides us with microbes useful for digestion." You can, therefore, accept which ever opinion most nearly coincides with your own wishes.

C. C.—Fainting at the sight of blood does certainly appear to be rather an effeminate weakness in a man, but I am afraid there is no remedy for it. It may be some consolation to you to hear that your case is not an isolated one. I have often come across similar and even stranger causes of fainting fits. One case was that of a man who swooned away at the sight of beer, another grew faint at the sight of underdone meat, whilst a third was affected in the same way whenever he came into contact with the fumes of a Turkish or Egyptian cigarette.

Ethel wants to know what is the reason that in an ordinary suite of dining-room furniture, that piece called "a lady's armchair" is in reality never made with any arms at all?———Not being in the furniture line personally, I am therefore unable to give my fair reader any technical reason; but I should suggest that they are probably made that way in order that the dresses of the fair occupants may not run any risk of being crushed.

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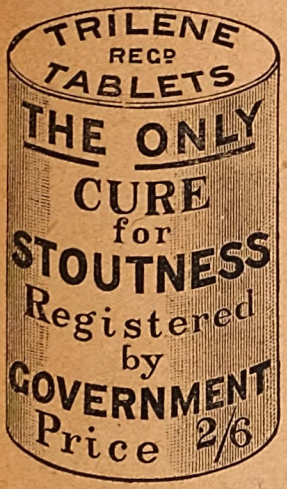
Can be CURED by taking

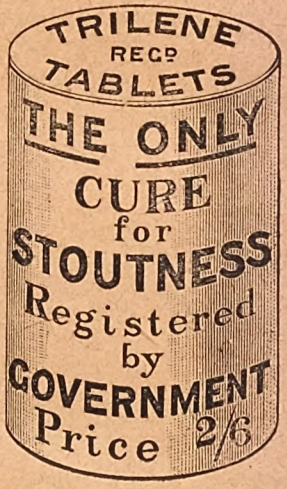
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.
"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Jhansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

MISS WELLS, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

MISS DUGGLEBY, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

MISS C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

MISS MACPHERSON, Balnagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontyohin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

MARIAN TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

MISS GILLESPIE, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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"KEEP ME FROM SINKING DOWN."

This is the chorus of an old negro melody, sung in the days of slavery in America. It is full of heartbreaking appeal to Heaven to help the poor slave in his trouble; to lighten his heavy load; to soften the thoughts of his master towards him; and at last to bring him safe to the City of Golden Streets, where there should be no more labour or sorrow or parting. Thus, in their religious meetings in the woods, and from their cabins on the great plantations when the day's work was done, the ear of the passing stranger caught the wild, pathetic refrain—

"Oh, my Lord; oh, my good Lord,
Keep me from sinking down."

The sense of sinking, the feeling that the supports of Nature are giving way beneath us, is one of the most terrifying things imaginable. People who have been in earthquakes, or been half drowned and then rescued, are able to appreciate it. And in certain diseases it is even more appalling than in the outward world.

A woman, describing a long and weary illness, says that the one element of it, which seemed more than any other to take all the ambition and courage out of her, was a feeling of sinking down. It was not physically painful, but something worse than pain—a sense of the approaching collapse of her entire vitality, as though she were about to be overwhelmed.

"All my life," she says, "I had been hindered and oppressed by weakness. To feel languid and tired was an habitual thing with me. I never knew the lightness, strength, and elasticity that so many of the more fortunate of my sex are blessed with. I ate but little, and even that more as a matter of necessity and custom than from desire. The keen relish for food which I saw in others was quite foreign to my experience. But the absence of appetite was by no means the worst feature of my case, for what I did eat gave me great distress at the stomach and often sharp pains in the chest, back, and sides. Added to this was a certain sensation of sinking that was strange and awful. I cannot set it forth in words. It was as though my body had no power to sustain itself. I may say that no medicine relieved this affrighting feeling.

"I became extremely sensitive and nervous, and ceased to take any pleasure in things and people around me. I lived a miserable life all to myself, and was practically alone even in the midst of my family and friends. Such was my history from year to year. Neither doctors nor drugs did me any good.

"I was still in this situation when, in February, 1894, I read in a small book of what Mother Seigel's Syrup had done for so many similarly circumstanced. Hoping, rather than thinking it might help me, I procured a bottle from Mr. Millns, Gipsy Lane, Forest Gate. It did me much good, as I could eat better and food agreed with me. Cheered up by this favourable result, I continued taking the Syrup, and in a few weeks the bad symptoms left me, and I felt better than ever before in my life.

"This medicine seemed to put new life into me, and since using it I have been free from the low, sinking feeling of which I have spoken. My son, who suffers from liver complaint, has taken Mother Seigel's Syrup with the greatest benefit. You are at liberty to publish what I here state. (Signed) (Mrs.) Emma Blatch, 33 Terrace Road, Upton Manor, Plaistow, Essex, February 8th, 1895."

Mrs. Blatch's complaint was chronic dyspepsia, a tendency to which she probably inherited. She, through her disease only, was half starved all her life up to the time she began to use Seigel's Syrup. Her nerves, being badly nourished—the same as the rest of her system—were feeble and disordered; and one of the results was that sense of sinking, as though her body sought a place of rest—even in the bosom of the earth. Alas! how many of her sex are fainting under the same burden—drawn irresistibly downward? Food—food enjoyed and digested—is their imperative need; and the way to it is through the use of the remedy that saved our correspondent. We know of nothing else that so helpfully responds to the cry, "Keep me from sinking down."

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A ROUSING NEW SERIAL STARTS TO-DAY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 450. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 12TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

PHYSICIANS AND SCIENTISTS
REPORT THAT
FROMMS EXTRACT
IS
A PERFECT FOOD
FOR
INFANTS AND INVALIDS
AS WELL AS FOR THE
STRONG AND HEALTHY.
HALF THE PRICE OF MEAT EXTRACTS.

SOLD BY CHEMISTS AND GROCERS

10/6 THE ALLEN FOSTER HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES 10/6

Acknowledged by Thousands of Delighted Purchasers to be the very Best Half-Guinea Costumes ever offered to the public.

Design No. 545.

Design No. 100.

They stand unrivalled for excellence of style, make and appearance. They are made in the Allen Foster **SPECIALITE SERGE**. Renowned for its durability and wear. All colours perfectly fast, and do not spot with rain.
COLOURS: Black, Brown, Navy, Myrtle, Ruby, Electric-Blue, Bronze-Green, Fawn, Drab, Cinnamon, Grey, etc.
Design No. 545 is the Fashionable Walking Costume for the **Spring Season** It consists of a stylish Reefer Jacket with Skirt. It has a velvet-welted collar, tailor stitching, and fashionably made skirt. A Costume any lady can wear. Price **10/6**. Skirt only, **5/6**. This Costume in our New Venetian Cloth will be **13/6**.
Design No. 100 has a bodice shaped to the figure, the lapels are prettily trimmed with braid and large buttons—a marvellous Half-Guinea's worth. This Costume in our New Venetian Cloth will be **13/6**.

PRICE COMPLETE, 10/6. SKIRT ONLY, 5/6.

Each Costume securely packed and sent carriage paid, 9d. extra. Skirt only, 6d. extra **Regular Stock Sizes** are 34, 36, and 38in. round bust under arms. Skirts being 38, 40, and 42in. long. Larger or special sizes to measure, 1/6 extra.

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HOVIS BREAD

will not only help to improve your digestion and consequently your health, but will also bring back that energetic and happy feeling of good health. Man does not live a natural life, so a good portion of a natural food, in the shape of HOVIS, at each meal will largely counteract the bad influence that modern life has upon the health and digestive organs. This is not an idle remark, but a proved statement, daily being verified.

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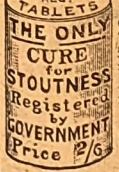
GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

ALL FAT PEOPLE



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An English Countess writes: "Your *Trilene Tablets act admirably*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

MR. CLAUDE CARTER, of Thorn House, Johnstone, N.B., says: "Your Tablets much reduced my weight and I have been waiting to see if it was permanent, and so it has proved."

MR. CANHAM, 87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, says: "Tablets cured my wife two years ago of extreme stoutness. It has never returned.

MARION TAYLOR, of Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "Have lost quite two stone."

A. PEEL, of Darley Hydro, Matlock, writes: "They have reduced and benefited me a good deal."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than one stone."

MR. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead. "I think them wonderful not only to reduce fat but as a medicine."

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.
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"JUNO" CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

DIAMONDS from £10. 16/8 monthly. JUNO Lady's or Gents' Safety £12 12/- 21/- monthly. £14 14/-, 24/6 ,, £16 16/-, 28/- ,, Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, sent post free to any part.

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6D. & 1S. PER TABLET.

This Soap prevents the growth of superfluous hairs, removes wrinkles, feeds the skin. You can get it at all the Stores and first-class Chemists. *The Family Doctor* says it is the most economical beautifier known to Modern Dermatology. It clears away all pimples, spots, redness, or roughness, makes the skin smooth and clear as a baby's, and cures shiny and greasy skins. Use it in the bath and for all Toilet purposes; it is most delicious. For irritable or sensitive skins it is matchless and delightfully soothing.

MADAME PATTI sends her best thanks for Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap, which she finds most excellent—Craig-y-nos Castle, South Wales.

USE ALSO DR MACKENZIE'S FACE LOTION.

Beware of many Imitations. Have Dr. MACKENZIE'S or none.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 480.] For the Week ending March 12th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

New Serial Story.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

TOWARDS the close of the first day of March, in the year 1202, two weary, way-worn travellers were descending the steep, rough road which led past the Hospital of St. Lazare, on the outskirts of Paris. They were still more than a mile from the city walls, and the younger, a fair, fragile youth of about fifteen, was apparently in the last stage of exhaustion, and no wonder, for they had been walking since sunrise. To judge by his dress, he might have been an apprentice, but the gentle voice and slender frame seemed to belie his male attire. It was too dark to distinguish the features of a face encircled as it was by clusters of soft, fair curls.

A striking contrast to him was the companion walking by his side, a tall, straight-limbed youth, whose whole bearing, though not wanting in a certain easy grace, spoke of strength and great staying power. On his shoulder he carried a heavy bundle slung at the end of a stick. He was unarmed, but at his side there hung over his leather jerkin a polished copper trowel.

There were lights in the narrow windows of the hospital, and the boy, thinking they had reached their destination, sank down on a milestone near the great door with a sigh of relief.

"Are you so weary, Eve?"

"I would not tell you before how my feet hurt me, or you would have wanted to carry me, and you have enough already. The stones have cut right through my shoes, and I don't think I could have walked another yard."

"Then I *must* carry you, dear, for we haven't reached the city yet, I'm afraid."

With that he bent over her, and would have taken her in his arms, but she made another resolute effort and started off again along the road with a little run. He tried to overtake her, but his own limbs were aching and his feet swollen, and after a few steps he stumbled over some loose stones.

For many a long day they had been tramping over the badly-made roads, and Eric had often carried his sister when her bleeding feet had made it impossible for her to walk; but to-night he was beyond that, so they struggled on together afoot, and hand-in-hand. Their way soon led them through a straggling wood, and then across a marshy tract, which had been cleared for the construction of a new road.

They were coming near to the walls, and could see the city lights gleaming before them, as with tottering steps and anxious hearts they painfully pressed on to find, as they hoped, food and shelter.

"Keep a good heart, Eve; God will help us. Think how we have got over our long and toilsome journey," said Eric encouragingly.

"If only we may save Princess Angel, I shall not mind what we suffer," was Eve's answer.

At that moment the sound of approaching horses' hoofs became audible, and in a few seconds they could discern the dim forms of two horsemen coming towards them in the half-lit darkness. One wore the armour of a knight, and the other had a Saracen's turban on his closely-shaven head. The knight was speaking:

"So, comrade, you are coming to Paris to kill a man?"

"Yes, my lord; to kill a man."

"And may I know the name of this man?"

"You may not know it, my lord."

"Not if I use persuasion?"

"It would be useless."

"Would blows avail?"

"They would be dangerous."

"Well, perhaps you are right. Besides, if I killed you I shouldn't learn your secret."

"And supposing *I* killed *you*, my lord," replied the

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"So, comrade, you are coming to Paris to kill a man?"

Saracen, "you would not be any nearer to your desire either."

"Quite so," said the knight grimly. Then, after a pause, he went on:

"This is a strange meeting of ours, for I am going to Paris to kill a woman."

These words struck terror to the hearts of the two unseen listeners, who were creeping along within earshot under cover of the deep shadows.

The Saracen appeared to take it quite as a matter of course, and merely answered with a yawn:

"Oh, you're going to kill a woman, my lord," adding, as an afterthought: "Is it your wife?"

"No," said the knight shortly, and after a few moments' thought he asked:

"Will your man be easy to kill?"

"He is the most difficult man to kill in the kingdom, my lord."

"Then it must be the King."

"I have told you I shall not reveal his name. And your victim?"

"She is the most difficult woman to kill in the kingdom."

"Then it must be the Queen."

The knight gave a loud laugh, and Eric had to put his hand over his sister's mouth to check the cry which had risen to her lips.

The moon now shone out clearly above the towers of St. Martin, and the knight noticed that his companion wore a trowel at his side, and carried a heavy stonemason's hammer over his shoulder.

"Are you going to kill your man with that?" he asked.

"No, my lord. I earn my living with that. I am a mason."

"And your name?"

"Mahmoud-el-Reis."

"Well, Mahmoud-el-Reis, as your man and my woman are the two most closely guarded people in the kingdom, how would it be if we were to work together?"

"I am quite willing."

"Then, suppose you help me to kill my woman and I help you to kill your man?"

"Agreed."

"Where shall I find you when I want you?"

"At Nôtre-Dame, where I shall be carving arabesques."

"That is well. You shall hear from me. *Au revoir!*"

He was just putting spurs to his horse when the Saracen unceremoniously took hold of his bridle and said:

"You have forgotten to tell me your name, my lord."

The knight hesitated for a moment, then he replied:

"I am Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet and Friend of the King."

"The Friend of the King!" repeated the Moslem thoughtfully; "and where shall I find you?"

"At the Louvre."

Mahmoud released the bridle and bowed gravely. Montruel set off at a sharp gallop in one direction, and the Saracen, after whispering to his beautiful horse, which responded instantly to its master's touch and voice, was rapidly lost to sight and sound in the intricate paths leading to the city.

As soon as they were alone again on the road, Eric and Eve emerged from the friendly shadow and discussed in a low tone the mysterious conversation they had overheard.

"I am sure they meant Princess Angel," said Eve.

"Yes, I know they did. Mind you remember their two names. The cold-blooded wretches, I wish I could have killed them!" answered her brother.

They reached the walls but found one gate after another shut in their faces, and were driven away by the oaths and threats of the archers on the walls. At last, one more kindly than the rest advised them to try the Porte St. Honoré, which was left open later for the King. As they turned away to follow this advice, Eve's powers of endurance came to an end and the poor girl sank fainting at her brother's side.

He raised her in his arms and struggled on, for he knew that every moment's delay lessened their chance of getting into the city that night, and after a quarter of an hour's painful walking, staggering as he did under his double burden, he came to a road bordered on either side by young elms, where, to his infinite relief, he saw two men riding towards him.

They proved to be a knight and his page, and as they were passing he called out, emboldened by despair:

"If you are Christians, have pity on us."

The men stopped, and, after a few words of kindly inquiry the knight bade his page give up his horse to the wayfarers. Eric refused to ride, but walked beside Eve, who had been lifted to the saddle as soon as she had regained consciousness. Her delicate appearance seemed to attract the attention of both knight and page, and the questions of the former proved, more than once, a trifle embarrassing to Eric, who had no intention of stating his business to an entire stranger. He told his benefactor that he and his young brother had been travelling for some months from Cologne, working at their trade on the way for their own support, and that as he had been admitted to the Freemasons at Aix-la-Chapelle he hoped to obtain work in Paris.

The knight smiled doubtfully as he listened to the part of the story affecting Eve, and glanced searchingly at her

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little hands, which certainly looked unfit to wield a workman's hammer. He asked their names, and looked somewhat displeased when Eric alluded to the Danish Princess whom the King had repudiated after marriage in order to take another wife whom he found more to his taste.

The young man's honest simplicity seemed, however, to win his favour, and before they reached the gate he told Eric to go to the Bishop of Paris the next day, and say that the knight Dieudonné requested that he might be included among the number of masons employed at Nôtre Dame. Eric could hardly find words to express his thanks, and, before he realised what was happening, they had passed through the Porte St. Honoré, between two rows of archers presenting arms, and were following the knight into the dark streets of Paris.

He stopped as soon as they were out of hearing of the guards, and bade the page help Eve to dismount. As he did so, the youth remarked to himself:

"I never came across a boy who weighed so little, or was so neatly built, as that one."

"Come here, little Adam," said the knight; and Eve,

Eric took his sister's hand, and went towards them.

who had given that as her name, came forward somewhat timidly.

"There is a purse containing twelve golden crowns for you to remember me by. Good-bye, and good luck to you." With that he bent down and kissed Eve's forehead before she had time to stammer out her thanks.

In another moment they were alone, and the solitude of the city was more appalling to them than would have been that of one of their native forests.

These two were the children of Atho, personal thrall of Canute, King of Denmark, who had been moved by the news of Princess Ingeburge's unmerited sufferings at the hand of the French King, her husband, to make the long and difficult journey to Paris in the hope that they might succour, or, at least, comfort her in her trouble. Now they had attained their goal, and, for that night at least, the prospect was not inviting.

The Rue St. Honoré, in which they found themselves, was one of the finest in old Paris, but the dingiest thoroughfare of to-day would compare favourably with it. The tall, gloomy houses had no windows facing the street, save one or two narrow, barred slits in the upper part of their projecting gables, for in those days each dwelling was so constructed that it might serve as a fortress in case of need. In the poorer parts of the city trade was carried on in booths, which were closed at sunset, and only the dark doors of the dimly-lighted taverns, whence sounds of ribald laughter issued in wild outbursts, stood open to entice the reveller and the wanton.

A respectable citizen would as soon have thought of throwing himself over the ramparts, as of venturing out into the unlighted streets. And when a noble walked abroad, he was preceded by a servant bearing a torch, and carried a drawn sword in his hand, for thieves and cutthroats lay in the dark corners watching for the drunken and the unwary.

The narrow, winding street was full of ghostly shadows, as the rays of moonlight, chequered by the driving clouds, penetrated here and there between the many gables, and every now and then the silence was broken by the sound of distant orgies.

To the two young strangers it was all so cold, so vast, so unkindly.

They were still in doubt which way to take when the sweet, solemn notes of a familiar German choral, sung by men's voices, fell upon their ears. Eric recognised the melody as one he had often heard among the Freemasons; and, as the sounds came nearer, torches flamed out of the gloom, and they saw a large body of men advancing hand-in-hand, bearing blunt lances wreathed in flowers. Eric took his sister's hand, and went towards them, singing the answering refrain.

The band halted before a gaily-decorated portico, and the leader, striking his lance upon the ground, called out:

"Who art thou, companion?"

"I bear the hammer and trowel."

"Dost thou know one of us?"

"I belong to you."

"What is thy title?"

"I am a free companion."

"Approach, and let thy hand speak to my hand."

Their hands met, and the mystic sign was given.

"Ah," said the chief, turning to his band, "his fingers speak the language of Cologne. Receive him into your ranks, and rejoice at the advent of a brother."

Eric was warmly welcomed by the members of the fraternity, and when they knew that Eve was his sister they extended their protection willingly to her also.

The heavy door of the house was opened in response to three peculiar knocks from the chief's lance, and the whole party entered the building. They proceeded to a large hall which occupied the entire ground floor of the house. The walls were decorated with scroll-work, interspersed with masonic emblems, and at one end of the room was a raised platform on which stood an iron tripod, surmounted by a mason's level.

The members had organised this meeting for the reception of a foreign adept, and when, some moments later, he came in, both brother and sister felt that they had seen him before.

He was a young man, though nearer thirty than twenty, with lithe, symetrically-formed limbs, and a face of remarkable intelligence, from which his brilliant dark eyes gleamed

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under their strongly-marked, finely-arched brows. He walked lightly and firmly to the tripod and sat down near it. When asked his name, he replied:

"Jean Cador."

The moment that he spoke two of those present knew that he was giving an assumed name, for two hours before he had said to Amaury Montruel, under the walls of the Abbey St. Martin:

"My name is Mahmoud-el-Reis."

CHAPTER II.

The Friend of the King.

Six or seven hours after Amaury Montruel had left the Saracen outside the gates of Paris, the "Friend of the King" stopped before the unpretending door of a house situated in one of the darkest corners of the city. It was a curious old place, partially concealed by an ancient tower, and provided with doors opening on to three different streets.

Here Amaury Montruel elected to live whenever his presence was not required by his royal master, and rumour ascribed two cogent reasons for this strange choice of locality. Some said he lived a dissolute life, and found it advisable to carry on his revels at a convenient distance from the Louvre; others maintained that this externally gloomy dwelling was the headquarters of a kind of secret police employed by him in the service of Philip Augustus, whose boast was "The King knows *all!*" Both these reports contained a good deal of truth, as will be seen later on.

Montruel let himself in, crossed the spacious hall, and went into his own luxuriously furnished room, whose only occupant was a man dressed in the fashion of a law student. He lounged among the cushions of his master's couch, and, though he had not yet reached the age of thirty, his face was drawn and haggard, and lined with deep furrows.

"Maître Samson," said Montruel, "has anyone been here in my absence?"

Hearing himself addressed by name, the man struggled into a sitting posture, rubbed his eyes and stifled a yawn before replying. He then proceeded to give his master a more or less confused account of secret visits that had been paid that night, and received a smart rebuke from Montruel for the inaccuracy of his information, which defect, however, seemed to matter little so far as the latter was concerned, seeing that he could supply every name which had slipped his muddle-headed secretary's memory. The arrival of three strangers in the city that night was also duly recorded, two were masons in search of work named Eric and Little Adam, and the third was a Saracen, who was supposed to have come at the bidding of John of England to assassinate the King. Samson also informed his master that a new adept had been received by the Freemasons that night, but he could not remember his name.

"His name was Jean Cador, wasn't it?" said Montruel.

"Yes, yes, that's it," answered Samson, with a look of relief.

"Well, it is a good thing my other agents have clearer heads than you, or they would profit me little. And, look you, Samson, if I find you in this half-drunken, besotted state again, it will be the worse for you. Go and fetch 'La Fontanelle.'"

When he was left alone Montruel threw himself on to the couch, and for some moments was absorbed in what appeared to be anything but pleasant reflections. Then he rose and began to pace up and down the room impatiently.

He was a man of about eight-and-twenty, and would have been strikingly handsome had it not been for the bitter, discontented expression which his features wore in repose. His usually proud, self-possessed bearing had now forsaken him, and the restless, nervous twitching of his hands, and the burning, unsatisfied longing that gleamed from his eyes would have been a revelation to his most intimate friends.

"What am I working for? Why do I take all this trouble?" he muttered. "I don't know myself. My present path would gratify the highest ambition, but I neither fear the gallows nor desire the throne. I would have served

Stood looking rather defiantly at him.

the King loyally if this woman had not come between us. But I want *her*, and I *must* have her, come what may! Everything else is worthless in my eyes."

He stopped his restless walk and buried his head in his hands.

"Madman that I am! I know how base, how hopeless it is; but I can't help myself! Men have gone mad over women ever since the world began, and they will do so till the end of time."

A sound outside the door made him pause and pull himself together before his next interview.

"La Fontanelle" was the wife of a tavern-keeper whose house was much frequented by important political personages, and Montruel had often found her a source of valuable information. She had various ways of eliciting news from her customers, and took care to provide them with all sorts of entertainments calculated to throw the most wary off their guard. The best music and dancing in the city was to be heard at their tavern, and all the performers were famed for their personal attractions as well as their talents.

From her Montruel learnt the astonishing news that the new Freemason adept and the Saracen, Mahmoud-el-Reis, were one and the same person, and, moreover, that she had not been able to gain any more information from him than this one significant fact, which had come to her knowledge through his being addressed by his two names by two separate persons who had spoken with him in the tavern. He had refused wine, and had turned a deaf ear to all the amusements provided, so that "La Fontanelle" had little cause to remember him with gratitude.

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Montruel instructed her not to relax her efforts to fathom his secrets, and then dismissed her.

"Agnes the Fair is with me. Will you not see her, my lord?" said the woman as she turned to go.

At first Montruel refused, then yielded to her persuasions, and told her to send the girl to him.

Agnes the Fair was rightly named. She was tall and

He buried his face in his hands.

supple, with the easy carriage and unstudied grace of a Hungarian; dark, glossy hair and large, lustrous eyes that bewildered with their ever-varying expression.

She came towards him with a quick step and smiling face, and threw her arms round his neck. The first touch of her lips gave him almost a sensation of pain, and he tried to repulse her; but, unheeding his coldness, she persisted in her caresses until he succumbed and kissed her upturned forehead.

Then, being well-versed in the art of coquetry she withdrew from him and stood looking rather defiantly at him.

"Well, what is the matter?" he asked.

"I want you to make me rich, this very day! You are rich and you love me, so I ought not to have to wait any longer."

He frowned and asked coldly:

"I thought you just said you loved me?"

"So I may, my lord, but I love myself better. Is not that the secret of all love?" she answered with a harsh, mocking laugh.

He did not reply, but sat looking sadly before him. Irritated by his silence she went on:

"My lord, dare you swear on your honour as a knight that you love me for myself?"

His eyes fell before her, and seeing that he winced under her gaze she continued bitterly:

"You dare not! and you are right not to perjure yourself for so poor a thing as me. Why did you change my name to Agnes? Why did you tell La Fontanelle to give me an ermine mantle and dress me in things fit for a queen? Was that all for my own sake? No! It was because the wife of Philip Augustus is like me, or I am like her, only I am younger and prettier than she is, yet your eyes follow her wherever she goes. I am only like a doll dressed up to remind you of *her!*"

The suddenness of this outburst, and the truth of her pitiless words completely disarmed Montruel for the time being. He saw that denial was useless, and his only aim was to end the interview as soon as possible.

"Girl, you shall have the money you want—not for the *love* but for the *hate* I bear you. You shall be rich this very day, but only so long as you hold your tongue. The first word that passes your lips——"

"My lord," interrupted the girl calmly; "I do not fear your threats. You shall not only pay me but fear me! I am stronger than you."

His eyes flashed dangerously, and his hand sought his dagger, but at the same instant his tormentor had reached the door at the farther end of the room.

"True," she said scornfully. "I had forgotten that some men can kill a woman. You were not quite quick enough this time. *Au revoir!*"

He heard her ringing laugh from the other side of the door, and as he turned uneasily on his couch, he saw the gaunt form of his secretary, Samson, standing at the other end of the room.

"The knave must have heard all!" thought Montruel to himself savagely. "His mouth must be stopped."

"What did you come back for?" he asked sharply.

"I thought you would like to know that it is said that the two masons who came to-night are Danes, and are supposed to be in league with Queen Ingeburge."

"She is not the Queen. There is no queen but Madame Agnes, the King's lawful wife. Begone! and keep your head clearer to-morrow. Here, take that, though it's more than you deserve."

With these ungracious words he threw a purse of gold towards Maitre Samson who picked it up with alacrity and pocketed it with a knowing chuckle. He knew why his master was so generous.

Montruel went to his sleeping apartment, and for the few remaining hours of the night, tossed about in the vain attempt to sleep, haunted by the consciousness that his secret was in the possession of two of his own creatures.

At eleven o'clock the next morning two visitors were announced. Herbert Melfast, Lord of Pevensey, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, the Saracen.

The former had been despatched to Syria in search of an assassin by John of England, who was particularly anxious to get rid of his powerful rival, and in part, liege-lord, Philip Augustus of France. After a long and protracted search, Melfast had returned to Europe with Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Fédavi, or brother of the Crystal Poniard, and had brought him to Amaury Montruel, in order to obtain access to the royal presence for the assassin.

This strange man with the dual name seemed to have a dual nature also. As Jean Cador, the Freemason, he was the enthusiastic artist who had learnt the secrets of Eastern art and dreamt dreams of delicate tracery, graceful curves and carved saints in purest marble, whose only weapons were the hammer and chisel. As Mahmoud-el-Reis, the fanatic, he planned murder and faced death with the impassive fatalism of an Oriental.

Herbert Melfast had come with the intention of getting a definite answer from Montruel, who had hitherto vacillated between his fear of detection should the plot against the

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King's life fail, and his desire to get rid of the husband of the woman he loved.

"My dear cousin Amaury, the time for hesitation is past," Melfast said, after they had been talking for a few minutes. "Before we leave you this morning, we must know whether you are for or against us."

Montruel looked like a hunted creature at bay. He had not the courage to take any definite step fraught with danger to himself, and now, craven that he was, the words failed to come to his white lips.

The Syrian stood by, cool, calm, and impassive. Melfast showed evident signs of impatience, and said at last:

"By all the saints! I'm at my wits' end, with one man as silent as the grave, and another who's as frightened as any old dame and daren't say yes or no!"

"If it were a mere matter of a sword thrust——" began Montruel.

"And if I were in your place a sword thrust should have settled it ere this. There's the man you hate as much as we do—more—for you are mad with love and jealousy—and yet you let him live to possess the woman you adore before your very eyes! You are with him day and night, you sit at his table and sleep at his door, and have not the heart to kill him! Where is your lance when you ride behind him, or your dagger when he lies sleeping?"

"We French knights keep our weapons for other purposes than assassination!" said Montruel, with an attempt to assume his usual proud manner, for his blood boiled at the cutting words he was forced to hear.

Melfast smiled contemptuously.

"Then, I take it, you are against us?"

"Would that I were, my lord," said Montruel dejectedly, after a short pause, "for I have sworn fealty to Philip, my Sovereign; but I seem to have neither faith nor reason left. I love Agnes de Méranie to my soul's perdition. I cannot go against you—I am—yours."

His voice broke completely as he said the last three words, and, sinking down in his chair, he buried his face in his hands.

The Lord of Pevensey watched him with ill-disguised contempt, and asked him coldly to name his own terms. Montruel bargained first for Agnes de Méranie, then for the wealth and princely estates that would be indispensable to her material happiness. These conditions were readily complied with by Melfast, in the name of his Royal master; but there was still another item, which Montruel almost hesitated to name.

"For some time back," he began, "Madame Agnes has felt very strongly that her happiness and security cannot be established on a firm basis so long as Ingeburge of Denmark lives——"

Melfast smiled again.

"I see. Well, we cannot let so fair a lady suffer annoyance for so trifling a cause. I daresay you would have no objection to dispatching her rival with your poniard, friend Mahmoud?"

The Moslem crossed his arms upon his breast and answered:

"The will of Allah be done! She is a Christian and a queen. She is condemned."

"Now, that's the sort of man I like, and you might take a lesson from him, Montruel. Well, the bargain is concluded. You give us the King's life in exchange for two rich duchies and the person of the Queen. Not a bad thing for you, I take it. But we must know definitely how and when you will deliver his majesty into our hands."

"It will be necessary to watch our opportunity, for, as you know, he is closely guarded, and we must be cautious, and I must have my duchies first, for your Royal master has been known to break his promises."

"That is entirely in my hands, you need have no fear," replied Melfast curtly. Then turning to Mahmoud he asked:

"And how about your share in the transaction, friend?"

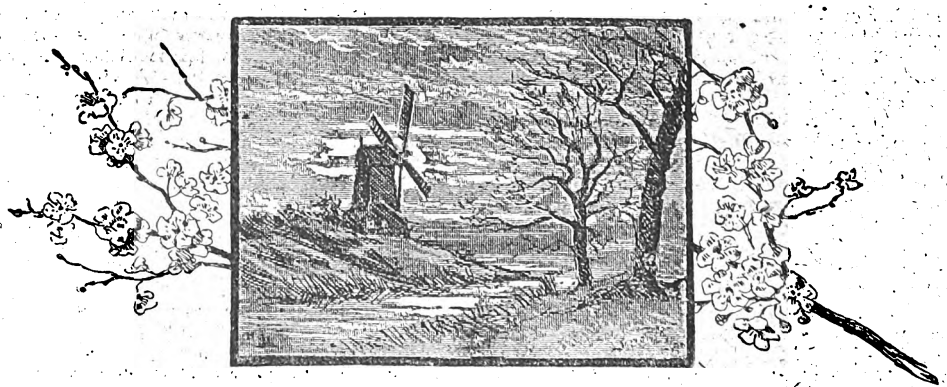
The Moslem drew himself up to his full height and began in his grave, musical voice:

"There is but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet. I am Mahmoud-el-Reis, son of Omir. My divinely appointed master, Mohammed, said to me: 'Follow that man and take your poniard.' I loved Dilah, who is lovelier than the houris in Paradise, and was loved by her. We were to have been united. I kissed away her bitter tears, for the Master said: 'Return with the infidel's blood upon your dagger, and Dilah shall be yours.' I went to Dilah as the evening shadows were falling, and said: 'I shall return, wilt thou wait for me?' and she answered: 'I will wait for thee.' When I left at sunrise the next morning, I heard her dear voice murmur behind the flowery hedge: 'Return quickly, my beloved!' and from that hour I have been as a body without a soul. My spirit dwells with Dilah under the palm trees. At night I seek the stars she may be looking at, but you have nothing in common with us, not even the same stars! If the blood of the Queen will procure for me the blood of the King, she shall die, for I must return to my bride. I have promised the white-haired priest to carve him a statue, and that I can do in a few days. If my task is accomplished and Queen Ingeburge is no more, will you admit me to the King's apartments this day week?"

The respite seemed to give Montruel fresh courage:

"If the Danish Princess has ceased to breathe, I will admit you to the royal chamber this day week," he replied, almost with a sense of relief.

(To be continued.)



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THE SCHOOLMASTER.

It was two o'clock on Saturday afternoon in the latter part of August. Mr. Gray sat at his desk in the superintendent's office of the high school, looking over the row of pupils, noting the transfers in the different forms, and counting the number of scholars assigned to each, for the ensuing school year.

"New teachers to break in," he grumbled. "I had just got my ladies into good running order, and now it is all upset. Miss Smith married; Miss Warren ill; Miss Allen gone; only Miss Gordon left. Then," referring to his papers, "there is Miss West, and Mrs. Harris—both experienced teachers, and highly commended. I think I can rely on them. I only wish I felt as sure of this Miss Wayne. Nobody knows anything about her, except that she comes from Bloomington, and has good certificates.

"A teacher needs a great deal of energy, tact, and firmness, and education, to deal with the arabs of the form she will have charge of. I suppose I'll have another such experience as I had with that room three years ago, when they ran out one teacher, and would have done the same with the second, only the holidays came to an end, and prevented them," and the schoolmaster sighed and rubbed his brow as if it already ached in anticipation of coming trouble.

"A quarter past two," he went on, "they ought to all be here in half an hour, but they won't."

Donald Gray's scholarly face looked paler in contrast with his very black eyes, hair, and more scholarly by reason of his glasses—worn to remedy his near-sightedness.

He was on the sunny side of thirty-five, unmarried—"a confirmed old bachelor," people said, and so he said himself. He had always been so wrapt up in study and books that he rarely went into Society.

He was a man who put heart and soul in his work. He followed teaching as a profession because he loved it. He was proud of the success, and ashamed of the failure of teachers and pupils in his school, just as parents are of the victories or defeats of their children. What wonder then that, with three hundred of the most unruly children on the one side, and an untried set of teachers on the other, his brain ached, and his heart sank at the prospect.

His gloomy thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a brisk, light step in the hall, and a moment later a young lady appeared at the door.

"This is Mr. Gray, is it not?" she asked, coming forward to the desk, "I am Carrie Wayne. No, I do not wish to disturb you," as he laid aside his papers—"for I know you are busy. I came early so as to have a look at my room—make a map as it were, of the battle ground, and plan the coming campaign. If you will tell me which one it is, I'll not hinder you further."

"It was no hindrance at all," he hastened to assure her. "Indeed, he was glad she had come, that he might make her acquaintance. He thought she was wise to 'take the lay of the land' before setting to work."

This and much more he said, as he accompanied her to the room in question, and called her attention to the new style of blackboards, and the latest improvement in desks.

He might have added much more—but he didn't. He might have told her that her promptness, her quick, energetic step, her cheery voice, her clear, steady eyes, her quickness of decision—had lifted a weight from his mind and heart. The anxious schoolmaster went home well satisfied with the corps of teachers with which the management had provided him.

It was not long before, by one means or another, Miss Wayne had won the respect, the confidence, and finally the devotion of every one of her unruly girls and boys. To be sure there were pop-guns and tops and other toys those trials common to all school teachers. There was even a long string with a mouse at one end, and Johnny Maloney at the other, that nearly frightened some of the girls into hysterics. But these minor difficulties were easily settled, and in such a way that, while the pupils felt they had to obey, still—as Johnny Maloney put it—"Miss Wayne was awful nice, and she would treat a fellow like a gentleman as long as he treated her near the mark."

The schoolmaster was happy. He found it very pleasant to chat with his young assistant as she stood at the window during playtime to watch her own scholars in the ground. They would occasionally discuss some book, or some question in metaphysics, and Miss Wayne could argue a point skilfully. It grew to be really a rest to him to step into her room on his round; there was such an atmosphere of cheerfulness and good fellowship.

One day, as he entered the room, there was a roar of laughter in which teacher and pupils joined—a laugh so hearty, that he smiled in sympathy. As soon as she could

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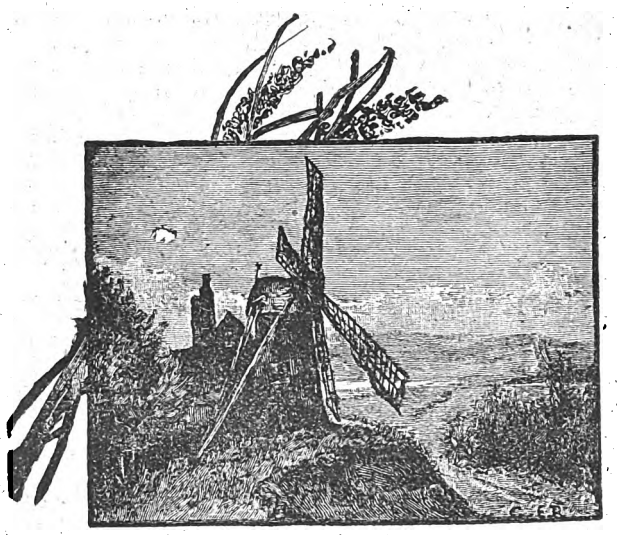

steady her voice, Miss Wayne turned to him saying, "Mr. Gray, Victor wants to know if it would not be a good plan to dig great wells and drain the lava from volcanoes, so that there would be no more eruptions. Will you answer him?"

In the laugh that followed, and the simple explanation with blackboard illustrations that called forth his love of geology and astronomy, the schoolmaster forgot all the vexation and weariness which the others had caused him, and went away refreshed.

So the weeks and months passed, until the summer vacation was again near at hand.

One morning Miss Wayne was absent from her post, "not well enough to come to school," her note ran, "but she hoped a few days rest would make her all right again."

Somehow the day was dull, and the schoolmaster went home uncommonly weary. He wondered how Miss Wayne was. Then he remembered that she had not seemed like her own bright self for several days past. She had looked worn and tired, and there had been a bright flush on her cheeks.

He believed it was all interest in the welfare of the school, for the closing examination, which no one could conduct so well as she, had made him worry continually over her absence. For she was ill, dangerously so, the lady teachers said.

It was not until the examinations were over and the doors of the school closed for the holidays, that Mr. Gray took time to call on his missing assistant. Late in the afternoon of the lovely July day he climbed the hill to the rose-covered cottage where she lodged. Her easy chair had been drawn to the window. The book she had been reading had dropped from her slender fingers, and she lay back with closed eyes, so that she did not see him as he came up the gravel path.

What was there in the sunny smile with which she greeted him when he was announced, to cause his heart to bound so?

Why did the sight of her wasted hands and pale face bring such a thrill of pain? He did not ask himself why. He did not realise how much it meant to him. He was content to sit beside her and answer her eager questions concerning the examination, the varied success of her pupils, and all the other items dear to a teacher's heart.

Then with congratulations over her convalescence and heartfelt wishes for her complete recovery during the holidays, he bade her good-bye.

He went away for his summer rest happy in the thought that she would be at her old post when school began again; and he did not dream of any change till the list was handed to him on his return.

"Miss Gordon, Miss West, Mrs. Harris, Miss Forsythe. Why, where is Miss Wayne?" he asked with a sudden sinking heart.

"I do not know," responded the trustee. "She went away some three weeks after school closed, leaving no application for a return and we have heard nothing of her since. We are all sorry, for she had proved herself so efficient that it was hard to supply her place."

How insufferably hot and close the room became all at once to the schoolmaster. He would certainly be stifled if he did not get out. Why did Mr. Butler drawl so, and explain everything at length? How he dreaded the coming school year all at once. How would he ever get through it? His head ached, and brain whirled, and heart sank at the very thought of it. And yet—why, only an hour before, he had been eager for the work to begin!

At length he was free. He seized his hat and hurried out.

A sudden darkness had fallen over the glare of that bright August day. There was a great weight on his heart—the weight of a passionate, burning love, that had been growing silently, swiftly for months, and had not discovered itself until too late. "Too late! too late!" he said it over and over to himself as he strode along.

He saw nothing but a pale, sweet face against its background of black shawl—heard nothing but a low voice with its silvery laugh—the face and the voice which meant all the world to him.

He found himself at last at the very gate of the cottage where he had last seen her. This had been her home, why should it not be his? Perhaps she would not seem so lost to him if he could live where she had lived, walk the same path to school which she had trod so often, or sit in the same chair in which he had last seen her.

With Gray, to think was to act. His ring at the door was responded to by a motherly old lady, who recognised him at once and gave him a cordial welcome.

"Yes," she said, after a little preliminary talk. "Miss Wayne has left, and I have three rooms empty in all. I can accommodate you, sir. Yes, I missed her a good deal at first."

"And you never heard from her?" the schoolmaster asked, waiting eagerly for his answer.

"Yes, once. She wrote from Aberdeen, where she was visiting her aunt. She said she was going farther north in a short time. She said she'd write again, I've had no letter yet."

That was all the news, all the hope he received. He settled down to his work, going through it in a mechanical sort of way, missing her at every turn. Every evening he looked for news through Mrs. Benton, and as constantly was he disappointed. At home his favourite companion was a volume of Emerson's essays, which she had left by mistake, and which had evidently been a favourite of hers also. It was well-worn and much interlined, there were marginal notes, written in her clear hand, and numerous references—many of which he remembered hearing her use in their talks together.

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So time passed on until four years had flown. Mr. Gray remained the same quiet, reserved man of yore, and silver threads were beginning to show themselves amid his black hair.

He was no longer principal of that school, but he had been appointed Government Inspector with a fine salary.

During this time he had tried to put away from him the love he had discovered so long before.

He had tried to make himself believe that fate had not intended his life to be otherwise. Had told himself that Carrie Wayne was too young and fair and bright for such a man as he, but in vain.

No word had ever come from her, and he no longer looked for any. She had forgotten the old town. Perhaps she was married. He knew she was happy wherever she was. She was always happy, and made everyone about her so.

With lagging steps he dragged his way up the front walk, tired with the day's work. Evidently his landlady had company, for she was talking in a very animated manner, and as he neared the open door he could hear that she was talking about him.

"Yes, Mr. Gray had lodged here for the last four years, and she had become quite attached to him." Then his heart gave a wild throb, and for an instant ceased beating, as a fresh, happy voice answered: "Mr. Gray and I were quite good friends four years ago, and I shall be very glad to see him again."

His pulses were bounding fast enough now. "She had come back at last. She was glad he was there!"

He heard her swift step coming through the hall, and started forward to meet her.

"Why, it's Mr. Gray!" she cried with a little start, as they met face to face at the door, and she held out her hand with a smile of welcome.

"Carrie!" he cried, in his excitement using the only name by which he had thought of her all those years! He was possessed with a mad desire to fold her in his arms, to cover her face with kisses, and to whisper all his long-restrained love in her ear. But reason told him it would not do.

She had gone away thinking that he cared nothing for her! She had lived all this time in the same belief. Perhaps she loved some one else—why shouldn't she? She might even be married. He must wait and see. All these things flashed through his mind in that brief moment that he held her hand, and just as rapidly did his traitorous eyes reveal them to her quick intuition. Then he said, as steadily as he could, "And you have really remembered us again, and come back to take a look at the old place?"

"I had never forgotten," she answered, while her eyes dropped before his passionate gaze. Then with an evident effort she recovered herself and said, "Come and sit down out here, and tell me the news. I am impatient to hear of all the old teachers, and what my former pupils have accomplished since I left. Does Victor still ask his comical questions, and do the chimneys still smoke?"

So she plied him with questions and listened eagerly to his answers, all the time reading the "old old story" so dear to a woman's heart, which his ardent eyes and subdued voice were unconsciously telling.

When he reached home the next evening he found Miss Wayne with the copy of Emerson in her lap. He went up the steps and sat down beside her. There was a strange new light in the eyes she raised to his when he said—pointing to the Emerson:

"Ah, I see you have got your own book again. I must thank you for forgetting it, for it has been a favourite companion of mine these four years." Then, all at once catching the meaning of the light in her eyes, he bent towards her, his voice low and trembling as he said, "Shall I tell you why it has been so dear to me, Carrie?"

"There is no need," she said. "The marked Emerson has told me what your eyes had not already said."

"And you understand it all? How I loved you all the time—but found it out too late. How I have stayed here, hoping that some day I should hear where I might find you! How my heart has longed for you and found comfort only in being where you had been, and touching the things which your hands had made sacred! Oh, Carrie, have you understood all this?"

She looked steadily into his glowing eyes for a moment, then lifted her lips to his. That was all the answer he needed.

Arnold Rees.

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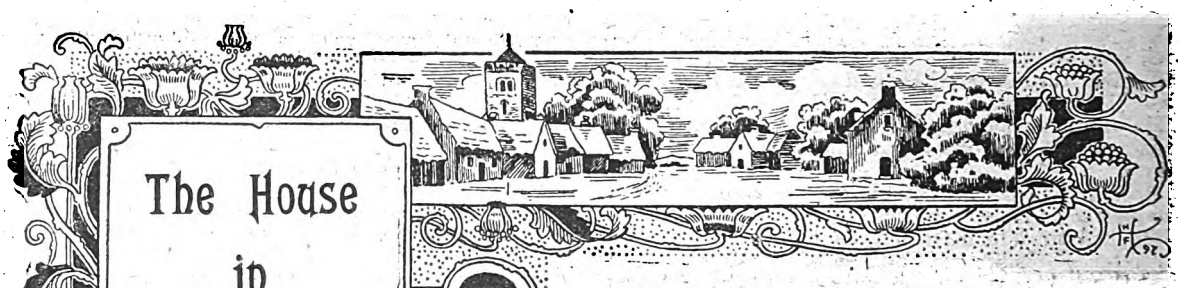

The House in Rotherhithe.

A TALE OF THE PRESS-GANG.

My cousin Humphrey hated me, and, though I make enemies through the confession, I hated my cousin Humphrey.

"*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse,*" says the French proverb, so I am not going to try and vindicate my hatred, except by the telling of this story.

To begin, then, Madge was the cause of all the disturbance. If she had not been so winsome and so enchanting, my cousin Humphrey and I would never have fallen out, and I—well, I should not have married the loveliest maiden in all the world.

They were troublous times, those of '98, when I was a lad, and the iron hand of Bonaparte lay on Europe.

Now we Tamplins had never been a war-like race. My father and my father's father had been but honest merchants, and there was I, an orphan, the head of a business that required constant watching, and betrothed to Madge, who was, like myself, alone and without the sheltering hands of parents to watch over her.

And now I come back to Humphrey, my cousin. From boyhood up he and I had been at constant variance. At Christ's Hospital we were for ever fighting, the one against the other. Then he went to Oxford and I to the counting-house in Cheapside, and we lost sight of each other for a space. Then he left the University and came to live in London, to *live*, as he held life—a *roué*, a gamester, a tavern brawler.

And now he aspired to the hand of my Madge. Can you wonder at my hatred? And as his passion grew stronger for the girl, so did her abhorrence of him deepen.

She was always begging me to be careful. I used to laugh at her forebodings. But one day matters came to a head.

We were strolling together one Sunday morning in Whitehall. All that morning Madge had seemed to be constrained, as though there was something on her mind which she was loth to put into words.

At last I taxed her with it. In a moment she burst out into voluble speech:

"You are right, sweetheart," she said eagerly, and there seemed to be a touch of tearfulness in her voice, "I have been for long wondering how I could tell you what is on my mind. And even now I can scarce come to it, for I know that you will but laugh at me."

She paused, and her dear eyes, like those of a frightened fawn, gazed up into mine.

"Speak on, dearest," I said, and I well nigh forgot where I was, in my longing to gather her up in my arms, and kiss the shadow from off her face. "What ogre do you see in me?"

"Well," she went on. "I had a dream last night, an evil, evil vision. I seemed to see your cousin Humphrey standing over you with a sword in his hand, pointing it straight at your heart, and I could not move, could not stir to help you. I screamed, and then I awoke, and I was screaming when I came back to wakefulness."

She shuddered, and the tears that had been hiding for long behind her lashes, broke loose from their bonds, and trickled down her rose-flushed cheeks.

How could I chide her foolish—as I thought—imaginings. I could but comfort her and promise caution. And then we talked of other things, of the future, and of our marriage, and so I forgot the occurrence.

A week passed by. One morning, seated in my office as usual, a note was brought to me. The handwriting was strange, and my clerk could give me no clue as to the sender. It had been found in the letter-box, among my other missives. The seal was of plain red wax, with merely the impress of a finger as signet.

I unfolded the paper. This is what I read:

"Your cousin Humphrey means evil to you. I can save you. Meet me to-night at seven of the clock at Number 15, Little Sword Lane, Rotherhithe. Come alone and in disguise. Knock and it shall be opened to you."

That was all. For a moment I hesitated, and he who hesitates is lost. I thought of Madge and her vision. If cousin Humphrey really wished me ill, here would be a chance of settling the matter for once and for all time.

And so I resolved to go to Rotherhithe that night.

Six o'clock came, and with it a fine rain driving through the streets of the city. Sombrely clad, and with an old hat I had long ago discarded upon my head, I sallied forth on my strange journey, by this time eager to learn more of the business, and curious as to who or what might be waiting for me in Little Sword Lane.

I had some little difficulty in tracing my way to the rendezvous. Rotherhithe has never been a savoury neighbourhood, and in those days it was a hotbed of infamy, the haunt of foreign seamen, the lair of many a desperate footpad.

At last I hit upon Little Sword Lane, a narrow thoroughfare bordering on the river. Arrived at No. 15, I hesitated for an instant, and then, summoning up all my resolution, lifted the latch and entered.

There were two occupants of the room in which I found myself—a squalid enough apartment, with a

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lantern upon the table, otherwise devoid of furniture—two men heavily cloaked and hatted.

They rose as I entered. One of them advanced without a word to the door, which he bolted, the other faced me, though I could see nothing of his countenance, by reason of his great hat, and the cloak he held over the lower part of his face.

"To what—" I began, but further speech froze on my tongue. The man threw back his cloak, and the next instant I was gazing down the barrel of a pistol, and into the sinster face of—my cousin Humphrey.

"Well met, cousin," he said with a sneer. "So you got my letter?"

If I felt fear you may be sure my hate killed it.

"So it was you," I made answer. "This is indeed an honour. How long have you taken up your abode in Rotherhithe?"

The villain laughed. "'Tis but a short lease I have," he answered tauntingly, "but 'twill serve my purpose. I would give you to understand that you are in my power, sweet cousin."

I shrugged my shoulders. "Have you taken to the road?" I asked banteringly. "There be many *gentlemen* who are of that calling now."

His face paled beneath my sneer. "Have a care," he hissed, "but why should I waste time. Listen. I have hated you all my life, and now the time has come for the payment of my debt. You think that you are safe, you think that because you have tricked me out of Madge's love you have won her. Fool! To-night the press-gang will be here. The captain of them is a friend of mine. I have promised him a fine recruit. In ten minutes he will be here. In twenty minutes or a little more you will be on board one of His Majesty's jolly-boats, and then—" he lingered diabolically over the words: "We shall see who is the winner of the final game."

I started back, white to the lips. My braggart spirit fled, and fear took its place. Yes—why should I be ashamed to confess it?—fear, abject fear, was mine.

At that very moment the sound of voices outside fell on my ears, followed by a hurried battering at the door. Humphrey's face was terrible to look at in its expression of horrid exultation.

I glared wildly round. There was no hope of escape; I was caged like a rat. The door was flung open, the room became full of sailors with cutlasses in their hands, at their head an officer.

Humphrey still held the pistol levelled at my head.

"Here is your man, Captain Vincent," he said.

The officer took two steps forward. I glared wildly at him. As I did so my heart gave a great bound, for in him I recognised Jack Vincent—he who had been my friend years ago in the old days at Christ's Hospital.

"Jack," I cried despairingly, "Jack, for the sake of old times, spare me!"

Jack Vincent staggered back as though he had been struck.

"Roger," he answered, and at his tone my vanished hopes came back to me, "is't you, dear lad?"

Then he turned to Humphrey.

"You villain!" he said. "Seize him, men; aye, and his confederate!"

Humphrey glared round him like a wild beast at bay. The men swarmed round him. A wild cry leapt from his lips. There was a flash, as flint struck steel, and the next moment a red-hot line seemed to run through my head. I flung up my hands and fell senseless.

* * * * *

When I came to myself I was lying in my own bed-chamber, with Madge bending over me, her gorgeous eyes full of blinding tears.

Well, it's all over, now. I am living up here in Warwickshire with my wife and family, sunning myself on the grass-grown terrace that sweeps down to the placid Avon.

Humphrey! He was killed on Vincent's ship, the *Zealous*, at the battle of the Nile.

Requiescat in Pace!

Richard Bird.

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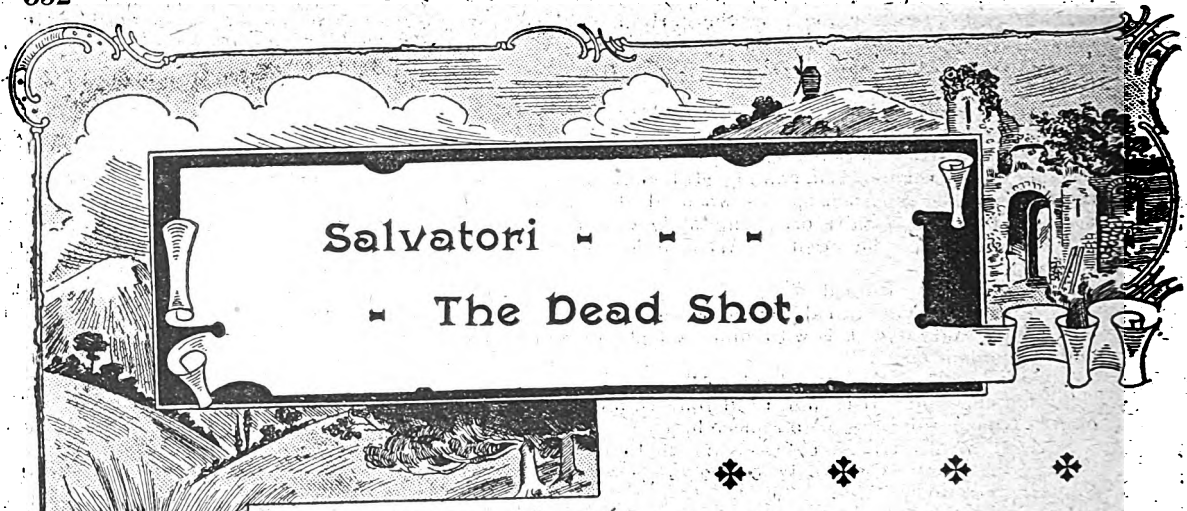
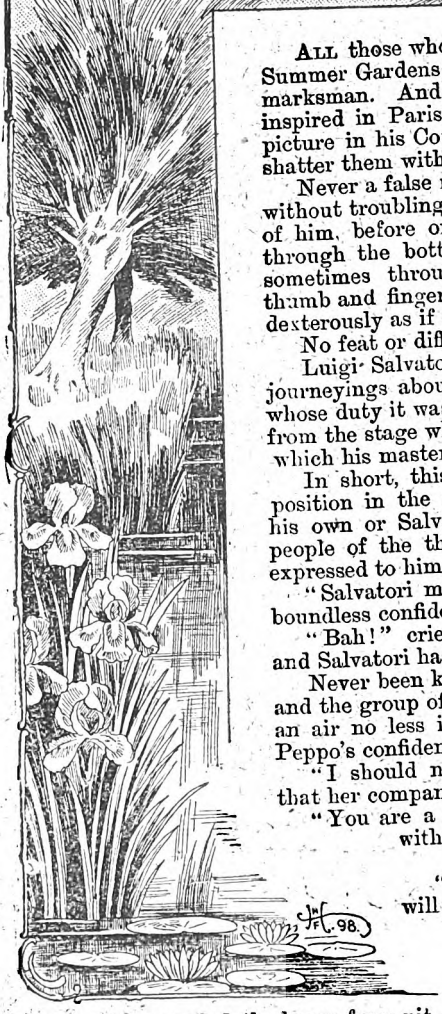


Salvatori - - - - The Dead Shot.



All those whom Paris counted as its most aristocratic worldlings flocked to the Summer Gardens to see in the zenith of his glory Salvatori, the illustrious Italian marksman. And, really, Salvatori justified by his surprising art the delight he had inspired in Parisian circles—tall, erect, superb in figure, handsome as a Vandyck picture in his Court costume, and tossing his glass or porcelain balls into the air to shatter them with the bullets from his rifle as they rose or fell.

Never a false movement, never an ungraceful gesture, seemingly firing at random, without troubling himself to aim, and the bullets struck the bull's eye to right or left of him, before or behind him, at the will of the marksman—sometimes passing through the bottom of a bottle, the bullet entering by the opening at the neck; sometimes through the heart of a card nailed to a target, or held between the thumb and finger; then, again, cutting the stems from clusters of roses as neatly and dexterously as if snipped with scissors.

No feat or difficulty too great for his wonderful skill.

Luigi Salvatori, at the time we first see him, always carried with him in his journeyings about the world a young lad by the name of Peppo, a sort of assistant, whose duty it was to see to the paraphernalia, to remove the broken balls and bottles from the stage when done with, and before the public to hold the cards and flowers at which his master aimed in his various feats of marksmanship.

In short, this Peppo filled not only a distinguished, but a decidedly dangerous position in the work of the evening, and one in which the least false movement—his own or Salvatori's—would surely have cost him his life. Time and again the people of the theatre, with whom he talked and amused himself between the acts, expressed to him their amazement at his nerve and daring.

"Salvatori must pay you," they said to him, "a good big salary, or you have boundless confidence in his skill."

"Bah!" cried Peppo airily; "the ball that will kill me is not yet moulded, and Salvatori has never been known to miss his aim."

Never been known to miss his aim? No matter, his comrades were not convinced, and the group of dancers awaiting their call to the ballet shook their pretty heads with an air no less incredulous. Only one of them, little Paulette, seemed to partake of Peppo's confidence.

"I should not fear M. Salvatori," said she, with a tone and a face so earnest that her companions began to banter her, and to cry out teasingly:

"You are a sly-boots, Paulette. But we know what ails you. You are in love with M. Salvatori!"

* * * * * * *

"To-night, Wednesday, July 17th, Monsieur, the Prince of Luisitana will attend the Summer Garden to see the incomparable Salvatori in his wonderful and dangerous feats, and who will doubtless surpass all former efforts in honour of the royal spectators."

Such was the announcement that on the morning in question headed the columns of all the prominent journals, and that when evening came crowded the house from pit to dome as soon as the doors were opened. The public sat even upon the window-ledges, and Stirler, the lessee, while awaiting the hour for the performance to begin, strolled through the wings and reviewed the scene.

"Such a night! such a night!" he cried to the throng of artistes flying in haste from room to room, filling the

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wings with the noise and bustle inseparable from the moment, just before the rising of the curtain. "Such rank! such beauty! Hurry, hurry, and dance your best; hurry, I say, hurry, the scene is just going to begin."

And the lessee, rubbing his hands and smiling delightedly, ascended to his private office. He had been there some twenty minutes, perhaps, examining the receipts for the evening, and smiling still more blandly as he ascertained the exact figures, when all at once the door burst open, and Salvatori precipitately appeared.

"We are lost!" he cried. "We are lost—lost—ruined!"

"Eh? What? Ruined?"

"Precisely. That rascal Peppo is as drunk as a lord. You know how it is with him—a taste of wine and the game is ended."

"So it is. What'll you do about it?"

"What can I do? It is ruin, I tell you—ruin for both of us. No one will consent to replace him."

"Stay! Wait a bit. We'll see about that."

And Stirler started hurriedly for the wings, Salvatori following behind him.

Five minutes later everyone—singers, gymnasts, jugglers, and dancers—hurriedly crowded together in the huge green-room of the Summer Garden, gazing upon the strange spectacle of the lessee shaking above his head a crisp piece of paper that all could see for themselves was a new bank-note.

"Peppo, who accompanies M. Salvatori in his performance," said he, "is ill and unable to come this evening. This note—five hundred francs all told—for the one who will consent to replace him!"

There was an eager stir in the motley crowd, and hands were extended, drawn by an irresistible itching for the money, but at the thought of how it was to be earned they quickly dropped again. As Salvatori said, no one would take the risk.

Stirler drew out a second note: "One thousand francs," said he. This time not even a stir—the silence unbroken.

Comprehending that it was useless to insist—the size of the sum was a nothing compared to personal fear—the lessee turned despondently upon his heel.

At that instant a group of ballet girls in the corner of the hall parted for the passage of a little figure coming from the shadow of the corridor, and advancing to his side.

"If you please, M. Stirler," said a soft, musical voice, "I will assist M. Salvatori."

"You, Paulette?"

"Yes, M. Stirler."

The crowd pressed about them to curiously regard this strange child, for a child she was, but seventeen years old, and so charmingly pretty, with her curly blonde hair, her fluffy, mist-like skirts—the silvery pink of a summer dawn—and her slender, rounded form. She seemed, indeed, standing under those curious glances, one of those dainty, exquisitely-tinted Dresden figures that are found among the treasures of a collector of rare china.

"Thanks, my child, a thousand thanks, and—a thousand francs beside!"

"No, M. Stirler, I do not want the money; I assist M. Salvatori because—well, because it amuses me."

"Ah, if it amuses you, good! It makes a difference!" and Stirler, enchanted to draw out of the affair without loosening his purse-strings, returned the money to his pocket, whilst the others hurried away to finish the scenes before Salvatori's appearance, and the latter dragged Paulette behind a screen to give her some necessary instructions regarding the part she was about to play.

* * * * *

"You understand me," demanded he anxiously. "You are sure you know what to do? First, balls in the air that I will break; then the target and the card between the thumb and first finger, very delicately, the arm extended. After that the cluster of flowers and the rose between your teeth, your profile towards me, and held without a movement till the bullet parts the stem and the blossom falls, cut from within an eighth of an inch of your lips. No danger, however—not a particle. I never miss my aim. You have seen me and Peppo—that he is never afraid?"

"Oh, yes, I know. But ——"

"But what, my child?"

Paulette hesitated, dropped her eyes, then timidly:

"At the last moment, please, M. Salvatori, do not—look me in the face."

Not look her in the face? Salvatori smiled. He had begun to comprehend.

"But why not?" said he gently, almost tenderly. "Why not, little one?"

"I—I am afraid of seeming afraid," Paulette answered, a trifling incoherently as to phrasing, perhaps, but read clearly as print by the man beside her.

"So be it, I promise you," said he. "But tell me, Paulette, tell me why you refused the thousand francs that Stirler offered you. It would have made you rich."

"No, on the contrary it would have——"

"Well, go on, 'on the contrary.' Finish what you were going to say."

But happily for Paulette the voice of the call-boy saved her from further questioning—the curtain was up.

* * * * *

The scene between them was simply an enormous success. Never had Salvatori shown such daring and prompt decision, and the entire Press next morning, without a dissenting voice, could not say enough in praise of the charming child who, at the last moment, had thrown herself into the breach created by Peppo's absence.

As it seems to be necessary that romance should enter into everything, so they invented stories to fit the occasion regarding the antecedents of the "courageous beauty." All declared her a young girl of aristocratic parentage, seized with an irresistible fancy for the

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handsome Italian, and ready to abandon her family on his account, one of the papers going so far as to name a certain duchess from whom she was lineally descended.

Salvatori also recognised how the appearance of Paulette beside him increased and emphasised his own success; how it doubled the attraction, because of the feminine grace and mystery surrounding her, so enticing to the eye of the public and stimulating to curiosity.

Nor did it take him long to become convinced that Paulette was a girl whose only thought and desire was the care of an aged and infirm mother. More than that, he had been deeply touched by the proof of love she had given him in assuming that rascal Peppo's duty.

How pretty she was, too! And, as he really believed that he would never again find a woman as devoted and loving as she, he married her.

A dream of happiness suddenly realised for this guileless child! Salvatori was her ideal—her god. Her only joy in other times had been to approach him, to speak to him a single word. One look from him brought sunlight for the entire day—enough to last her till the morrow.

But joy does not often kill. Paulette accustomed herself to her new honours, and returned for them a love that was an adoration. Salvatori, too, seemed to adore Paulette. They were truly the most united of couples, and the most charming to see.

The happy husband, loaded with honours and triumphs, a guest at the tables of sovereigns, told the wife, ardently and truthfully, that it was to her he owed it all.

"My happiness, even, comes to me through you, Paulette. I love you! I shall never, never love anyone but you—you who have held yourself so straight and bravely before the muzzle of my rifle!"

* * * * *

Alas, that when one has climbed to the pinnacle of bliss, one must descend again—frequently with a plunge!

Paulette had been too happy, and after two years of joy without a cloud, and mutual love, felt all the more cruelly the sting of the sorrow that had come upon her.

Salvatori loved her no longer.

He was still kind to her as in the past—still amiable and apparently attentive to her wishes, nay, at times, anticipating them, but this was not that other love. Paulette felt that she was no more mistress of her husband's heart. Correspondence withheld from one long and unexplained absence on the part of a husband—it does not take a wife very many days to discover that her reign over her husband's affections has reached its limit.

But Paulette, you see, was such an innocent; she had never read a single romance or studied the world around her; she did not reason, and a notion of revolt never once entered her head any more than that of resignation. She did not say to herself:

"Wait, Paulette, wait; he will surely return to you—you will have your happiness back again."

She did not even make an effort to regain it. No, not a sigh, not a tear, nothing.

"He loved me once," she thought. "For two years his heart was mine, and mine alone. Alas, that this world's happiness should be so short! To-day it is done with—everything ended. Then, if it is ended, why am I on this earth?"

Should she speak to Salvatori of her gnawing sorrow? Should she utter a complaint? Oh, no, never! He had shown himself enough of a prince when he had descended to her level and made her, a little ballet girl, his honoured wife. He had been very good to her, very patient, and for two whole years he had loved her and given her an undivided heart.

Nevertheless, though Paulette knew he loved her no longer, she felt no anger against her husband. She suffered cruelly, true; but then it was all her own fault—she should not have felt things so keenly.

Two years of perfect happiness! How few could count upon even two years with certainty? She had had them; she would keep them! How? The simplest way in the world; as the gambler keeps his winnings when luck goes against him: by throwing up her hand.

One thing only troubled her in accepting the deliverance open to her. Salvatori might blame himself, accuse himself of a crime, or suffer remorse. But she put it from her, this harassing thought.

"I will write it down," she murmured. "I will write everything; no one must censure him!"

* * * * *

After a period of absence, Salvatori returned to Paris. The Summer Garden was packed, and a perfect ovation greeted the handsome marksman as he entered for his work, Paulette beside him.

First the balls, which Paulette tossed and Salvatori shattered; then the target; the bottles, which the bullets entered by the openings in their necks with swift unerring precision. After these the clusters of flowers, and then the rose between Paulette's teeth severed from the stem "within an eighth of an inch"—Salvatori's own words—of the rosy lips.

The same old programme, and this, as of old, the closing feat; but Paulette's lips were not, as usual, wreathed with a happy smile. As the moment came she drew a rose from the front of her corsage—a rose with a stem so very short the people shivered as they saw it—and stepped to position.

"One, two—are you ready, Paulette?" Salvatori cried, as his wife stood straight and white before him, her eyes, filled with a strange sadness, turned upon a box to the right of the stage, in which sat a beautiful woman smiling at her husband.

A smile, too, which Salvatori returned, as once more he repeated his question, "Are you ready, Paulette?" Once more he began his counting, and raised his rifle.

Ready? Oh, yes. Paulette was ready, and an instant later—dead upon the boards. She had bent her head as the last words left her husband's lips, and would suffer no more.

Weston Maire.

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THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

THE TALE OF THE YELLOW WAR

BY M. P. SHIEL.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to meet the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused.

CHAPTER X. (*continued.*)

Had Mr. Hardy been more successful in his love affair he would have walked straight home, and to bed, and so the course of the world's history might have been otherwise.

As it was, he went wandering through a number of streets in a desultory mood, not knowing whither he went.

Night had fallen.

He had left Bosey Jay more in love than when he had approached her door. He said to himself, walking himself tired among the streets: "I will have her, I will have her, by the Lord——"

Suddenly his own name caught his eye. He was in front of the Palace Theatre of Varieties.

London was alight. The streets were thronging with people. The façades of the Palace were arrayed with galaxies of brilliant jets.

There, on a large board, with the printers' ink still wet on the placard, appeared the attraction of the night:

MISS LOTTIE COLLINS
Will Appear To-night
In Her New Patriotic Song,
Entitled:
"BRAVO, JOHN HARDY!"

The song had been composed, learnt, orchestrated, and rehearsed, all in the course of a single day, in the fixed assurance that it would "catch on."

John stood looking at the placard, smiling. He felt in his pocket; he had some money. It was about time for the entertainment to begin. He went in.

His mind was, in some of its aspects, as unstable as water. It shifted like phosphorescences in the dark. All forms of pleasure, especially, had great power to deflect and draw him. He could be won from grave to gay by the simplest means. He had not only the soul of a hero, but the mind of a baby.

He remembered that one could smoke and drink in music-halls. He would make a night of it. If there was blame, the blame was Bosey Jay's. He put his hand into his pocket again, and looked at what money he had. Good; there was plenty.

Nearly all the afternoon, and at this very hour, a stream of carriages, containing ecstatic photograph-hunters, Mr. Goschen, Lords of the Admiralty, pressmen rabid for an interview, and nondescript distinguished persons, were moving toward, and away from, the door of No. 11a Cavendish Square. But John Hardy did not happen to be at home. He found himself in one of the "pit stalls" of the music-hall, during the performance of a ventriloquist and his talking dolls. In a few minutes he had provided himself with cigars, and a goodly tumbler of spirit-and-soda-water.

A girl sitting next to him touched a companion on the other side of her—a soldier, whose name was John Brabant—and whispered:

"Just look at him; isn't he handsome!"

Her name was Ada Seward. She was the woman who, alone in all the world, had been able to break into fragments the cold rock of Dr. Yen How's nature.

She was a small creature, with skin of a warm yellowish colour, and little quaint Chinese eyes, and light hair with the faintest tinge of red in it; not perhaps pretty, but with some unspeakable attraction of piquancy about her queer, saucy little face, which had caused her to receive no less than twelve offers of marriage before she was twenty. Her friends declared that she was the living image of Miss Marie Tempest, the "Geisha" *prima donna*. In figure she was typically English.

She was perishing to speak a word to the sweet, pink face by her side, with its delicate, aristocratic lines. At last, during a loud song consigning the German nation to perdition, she found her chance.

"Now, young gentleman," she said, "that is *my* dress please; it won't be fit to look at to-morrow if you throw any more brandy-and-soda over it."

John gave her the sweetest smile she had ever beheld on mortal lips, and said: "Pardon me."

At the same time he looked into her face, and liked it.

The waiter had already borne him three whispering glasses of beverage

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"May I?" he said; "here, waiter—may I order for you and your companion?"

John Brabant bowed low with a hearty:

"Thank you, sir!"

But Ada, who was quite three or four grades higher in the social scale than he, being only in his company on account of old associations, nudged the soldier deprecatingly, objecting to the obligation from a stranger.

It was too late, however. The offer had been accepted. In a few minutes John Hardy and Ada were talking—Ada laughing, John smiling. Brandy-and-soda became the order of the day.

All the time the audience was in a queer mood, impatient, intolerant. There was neither an empty seat nor a spare inch of standing-room in the place; but the people's interest was all bent upon one future point in the entertainment—the entrance of Miss Collins—and meanwhile they took not the least pains to conceal their indifference to the other performances. There was something rowdy and noisy in the tone of the assembly.

"By Jove, I do like you!"

His lips were at her ear.

"Ah, now, that's the drink talking, not you."

"The drink? Nonsense! I do, really. Do *you* like me back?"

"Ah, that would be telling!"

"You do!"

"Go away with you! Why, I have only just seen you!"

"That is of no importance."

"Ah, isn't it, though!"

"Don't be a cruel girl. Here, waiter——"

"Do you know what I think you are—from your ways?"

"No; tell me."

"*You* tell me; let me see if I am right. What are you?"

"You mean my profession?"

"Yes."

"I am a sailor."

Had Ada's ears been more delicately nurtured, she would have detected in that sentence, half-drunk though Hardy was, a very slight intonation of quiet, but imperial arrogance.

"A sailor? You? Go on! Show me your hands."

"Oh, my hands are not very rough, I admit. But still—I am a sailor. You may believe me—in the Navy, you know."

"I see. Well, do you know I had an idea of something like that? A sailor! Yes, that is what you *are*. You come to the point so soon, don't you?—like sailors do."

"Well, but do you like me back, now?"

"No, thank you. No sailors for me. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow."

"That is because they must. You can't punish them for doing their duty to their country, can you?"

"The country is one thing, but girls have got to look after themselves, you see."

"You are too practical."

"I have got to be."

"But you will have me for your sweetheart?"

"Perhaps I will, and perhaps I won't. It depends."

Here was a Study in Indefiniteness. John Hardy fled from the mental indeterminateness in which the answer left him, by turning to his glass for a drink.

The shifters of the indicating numbers removed the card 7 and put up the card 8; "8" meant Lottie Collins. A murmur of expectancy rumoured through the building. The air grew electric. Everyone knew that "ructions" were coming. Already the nerves of the audience were strung high and tense.

"That is very indefinite."

"I can't help it. Wait and see how we feel to-morrow morning."

"Only say now that you like me."

"Well, suppose I say—yes. No, no—it's too stupid!"

"Sweet of you, Nell! Is your name 'Nell'?"

"Yes. How on earth did you know? It is my second name. They call me 'Ada.'"

"Ada—what?"

"Ada Seward."

"I shall call you 'Nell.' I like that better."

"And what is yours?"

"John."

Ada was smitten by the Coincidence. On each side of her was a "John"—one a soldier, the other a sailor. She was the link which united and disparted Her Majesty's forces.

"John—what?"

Here John paused. He was now in a high state of fuddlement, but he was still capable of remembering that his name was on placards all about the town, and was about to be proclaimed aloud by "No. 8."

"John—what?" came the question again.

But Miss Collins rescued him. There was the rattle of a drawn-up curtain—an intense "Sh—h—h" swept through the building—and at once there followed a clap and cry of applause as the whole audience leapt to its feet. Miss Collins had bounded on to the stage, bedraperied from head to heel in the Union Jack.

Amid a dead silence, the *artiste* lifted up her right arm, and so stood for about a minute. Then she gave a sharp, shrewd twist to her wrist, and passionately shouted:

"Bravo, John Hardy!"

And again the audience leapt to its feet, with howls of rapture, which lasted nearly five minutes. The boxes were packed with some of the most distinguished people in England, with Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry Irving, Mr. Stopford Brooke, Sir Henry Hawkins, the Lord Chief Justice, and many others.

At last there was quiet. The *artiste* began to sing. The tune was simple, catchy, and stirring—the words were like strong brandy:

When the Allied fleet came over, and passed the Straits of Dover,
They thought they'd have it all their little way;
But a knowing little cardy (they call him Johnnie Hardy),
He crashed them his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye.

Chorus.

Oh! isn't he a tricky little boy?
And *don't* he know his little way about!
When he handed in his card, and the French saw "Johnnie Hard,"
Lord! transformation scene, you bet, and wild, distracted rout!

There's a little sailor lad, and his eyes are mild and sad,
And you'd think he'd not one single word to say!
But Holy Moses guard ye (he's known as Johnnie Hardy)
When he crashes his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye!

Chorus.

Oh! isn't he a joy, that jolly sailor-boy,
And *don't* he know his little way about!
When he winks his other eye, you may just lay down and die,
For his red right hand is thunder, and his eyes shoot lightnings out!

By this time the audience, wrought up to a high key of excitement, had caught the lilt of the tune. When Miss Collins repeated the last chorus, the house vociferated it, utterly drowning her voice in the wheeling tumult which now prevailed. She pretended to retire, loaded with the masses of flowers which had been showered upon her from the boxes; but she at once returned at the call of the audience. She sang:

Ah, boldly they came over; and they crossed the Straits of Dover;
But "Hardy!" was the answer which England hurled that day;
And Johnnie winked his eye, and they all lay down to die,
When he crashed them his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye!

Chorus.

So isn't he just bricks, with his little crafty tricks?
And *don't* he know his little way about?
For his head is crisp with curls, and he's a devil with the girls,
But ten thousand times a devil when the Dogs of War are out!

Once more she repeated the chorus, the audience taking it clamourously up. Then she tripped from the stage. But the house roared after her with the frenzy of men parting with their last earthly hope. She had now utterly mesmerised and enthralled them. The moment was ecstatic with an electrical tension impossible to describe. They bawled, they yelled, they stood up straining forward with frenzied gesticulations, tears pouring down many faces,

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handkerchiefs waving. At last she reappeared. She had a verse in reserve. She sang:

Old England is the mother, and each of you a brother,
To this stern brow that bids the world obey;
And now he shan't be tardy (God bless you, Johnnie Hardy!)
In crashing more Ta-ra-ra Booms-de-aye!

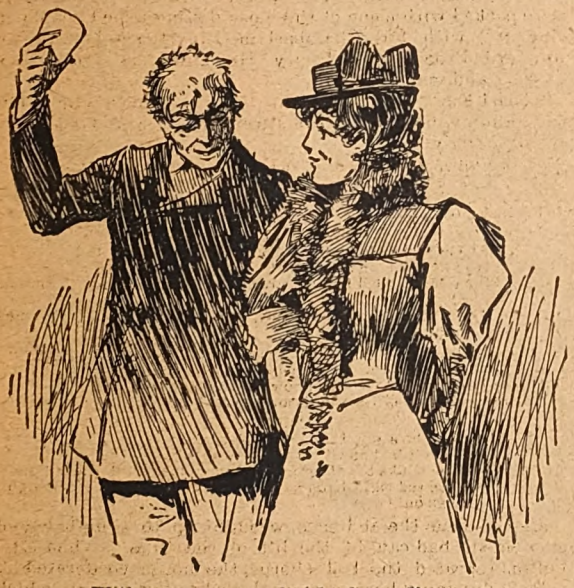
Chorus.

So, isn't he a joy, this British sailor boy?
And *don't* he know his little way about?
He couldn't hurt a fly, but he's tricky, and he's sly,
And he makes the sky to redden, and the roaring Deep to spout!

She rendered this last verse with almost distracted nerve and heat; and before proceeding to give the chorus a second time, stretched forth her arm, and in a fierce tone of command, cried: "Stand all!"

The audience sprang upright yelling, the male part of it uncovering. The singing of the last chorus burst forth universally. And there, too, was John Hardy, hopelessly drunk now, with an arm round Ada Seward's arm, he, too, standing, he, too—with an empty glass brandished high in his right hand—laughing and singing:

So, isn't he a joy, this British sailor-boy?
And *don't* he know his little way about?
He couldn't hurt a fly, but he's tricky, and he's sly,
And he makes the sky to redden, and the roaring deep to spout!



With an arm round Ada Seward's arm.

No sooner had Miss Collins disappeared, amid an unparalleled tempest of sound, than the audience scattered. They were capable of no more emotion for that night.

John Hardy found himself in the street, leaning on Ada Seward's arm. They were alone. Where the soldier Brabant had vanished to, neither of them knew.

"Shee cheers for ole Nelson!" cried John Hardy. "Ha! ha! ha!—ole Nelson. Shee cheers, by the Lord——"

"Come now, be good," said Ada. "Get into this cab, will you?"

"Where you live?"

She gave him the Pattison address, and impressed it upon him.

"Mind, I shall expect to hear from you," she said, as she shoved him into the cab, and kissed him.

John, going home in the cab, murmured, with fainting, intoxicating breath:

"Bosey! Bosey! I shall have you yet, by the Lord——"

And Ada waited in vain. The next morning he had clean forgotten her address.

But he remembered—*her name.*

CHAPTER XI.

John Hardy Among the Nations.

The next day John Hardy shut himself up in a fit of sulky moroseness, flatly refusing to see anyone. The day after that was Sunday, and on Sunday evening he was at Freshwater.

His yacht was ready to sail.

He had in his breast-pocket letters-of credit from the bankers of his solicitors to business houses in Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, Pekin, and Shanghai.

He had also with him a French dictionary, a German dictionary, a Bible, and a very elementary French conversation-book.

He had also with him a portrait of Bosey Jay, which he had obtained that morning from Lady Sinclair.

He had also with him a shilling map of Northern China, four sorts of foreign coin, and a revolver.

As he stepped from the train from Newport at Freshwater he saw a late Sunday-edition placard announcing that 100,000 British troops were about to embark for Havre for a French invasion; and this made his heart rejoice.

The *English Bird* weighed anchor at eight p.m. He was under requisition by letter to attend at the Admiralty the next day, but he took not the least notice of it, leaving it to be supposed that he had set out before receiving the requisition. He was a free subject, he said to himself.

Before sunrise on Wednesday morning he arrived at the quaint old town of San Sebastian on the north Spanish coast.

He had taken the precaution to bring no linen marked with his own name. He intended to travel as an American citizen, under the name of Petersen. From San Sebastian he sent back the yacht to England, and at once proceeded with a small trunk by train to Bayonne, thence to Bordeaux, and thence, by way of Angoulême, Poitiers, and Tours, to the French capital. He reached the Gare d'Orléans on the Thursday morning at 9.30, nearly a week after the Battle of Shoreham, and proceeded westward to a hotel in the neighbourhood of the Madeleine, reporting himself in the hotel bulletin as having travelled from Spain.

The first thing that happened to him was that he fell in love with that charming courtesan, Paris.

He had been so exceptionally and scrupulously insular, that he had always instinctively shrunk from leaving England, except in the ships on which he served. Hence he knew some of the ports of Europe very well, but had never been to Paris.

Paris is the *fille de joie* of the cities of the earth. She alone is purely feminine. She is as queer, and treacherous, and lovely, and indescribable as woman. Whoso truly loves woman will not escape her witchery. She is a divine sinner.

John Hardy intended to leave Paris at three o'clock; but he put off his departure till the next day; and meantime he got into trouble.

The news of the disaster to the Allied fleet had four days since reached France. But the whole thing was wildly incredible; it was not believed, or believed with only half the mind; and for this reason: that the news had come by the round-about way of the Mackay-Bennet-cable—from New York! What lent some colour of truth to the report was the incomprehensible fact that the Contre-Amiral and General de Rosney had sent no dispatch boat to announce the landing of the troops on English soil. Yet the nation refused to believe the incredible. They waited, with suspended mind, with bated breath, wildly hoping.

In the impossible contingency of their fleet having been defeated, they argued that at least *one* ship would have

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escaped to bring them the news. But no ship had come: the fleet could not be defeated.

The fact was that *five* ships had escaped—three liners, and two battleships. But of the three liners, one was towing another at the rate of about half a knot an hour, and the third was just barely forging through the water against a head wind under sail alone. The two battleships were German, and in sorry plight. One with a broken screw, and one with disabled engines, they were making their slow way north-eastward with a vague outlook toward Bremerhafen in their mind's eye.

Of the British ships not one single craft had remained afloat.

However, on the morning of John Hardy's arrival in Paris, one of the three liners drifted on to the French coast, near St. Valéry en Caux, having on board an infantry brigade, and a crew, perishing with hunger, on the verge of frenzy with thirst. By noon Paris knew.

Then there was *brouhaha* and *houlabalu*, or, as we say, "ructions."

Paris, in her rages, as in all else, is like a woman. She tears her finery and ribbons to shreds; she foams at the mouth; her hair is all over the place.

Her last exuberance had taken the shape of the Dreyfus riots, half Anti-Semitic in its *objectif*, partly Anti-Zolaesque, and partly only rowdy. At all events, Monsieur Zola, in the people's plight for an object for their wrath, had been the scape-goat. The Government had triumphed. Monsieur Zola had been declared a "*dégénéré*" by the University; he had been regarded as a "*cas*" by the scientific *aliénistes*; he had been hopelessly lampooned and caricatured by the press; the sale of his books had ceased; he was regarded as a man over and done for.

He waited. On this Thursday morning, the 23rd of March, he had his revenge.

Under the great statue of France in the Place de la Bastille he stood, and the crowd round him spread far up the various avenues leading into the Place. He was recognised: "*C'est M. Zola! C'est M. Zola!*" And he harangued them.

He had always been known as a very decent orator. And he three times used the word "*trahison.*"

This word, "treason," has a strange glamour for the French mind, carrying with it an extraordinary hint of the blackest infamy.

It was a word which Paris could ill bear at that moment. It simply made the crowd a kennel of rabid dogs. Already in other parts—in the Cité, the Place de la Concorde, la Vilette—excited throngs were rushing riotously about the rues and avenues and boulevards, without the incentive of M. Zola's "*trahison.*" And in the midst of M. Zola's crowd, in the deadliest peril, stood John Hardy.

On his forehead was the strip of black plaster which covered the scratch he had received at the Battle of Shoreham.

By some sure intuition, the French know an Englishman at once; they say of you at a glance, "*Il est Anglais.*" And John Hardy was very much of an Englishman.

If ever human boy enjoyed himself, it was he at that moment. He loved a row for its own sake, and here was the sweetest of all rows—a French row.

What added a touch of intense exquisiteness to his enjoyment was his inner knowledge of the cause of the row. These children had dashed themselves like impotent waves against the rock of England, and were now astonished to find that rock was hard, and could shatter them.

John could hardly understand a word of the harangue, though he once heard his own name, but he guessed what it was all about, and he saw it in the distorted faces of the people. He stood looking up into the staring eyes of the orator, quietly smiling.

At the first sound of the uproar he had run from his hotel, and followed a crowd eastward. No thought of his danger occurred to him. His attitude of mind towards the people among whom he found himself was one of quiet and assured dominancy, almost like that of a master towards his servant.

M. Zola was about to complete his oration, and the mob to rush away with some indefinitely hostile purpose toward the Elysée, when John Hardy felt himself touched with a deliberate tap on the shoulder.

He looked round and up.

He was confronted by an extremely foreign-looking person, a middle-aged man to judge by his face, but with a head of quite white, long hair, and a splendid white beard and moustache. He wore a grey, broad-brimmed, soft felt, sombrero sort of hat, which dropped on one side like a lady's Gainsborough. But the part of him that attracted attention was his two hands; they were simply two constellations of bulky, flashing jewels: on each of the eight fingers being several huge rings, glittering with every variety of luminous stone.

His face was very excited. But he said to Hardy, with perfect polished politeness, lifting his sombrero:

"*Ah, monsieur a marché sur mon pied!*"

"*Je ne comprends,*" said John.

"Ah! it is as I thought. Monsieur is, then, English."

"That is so," answered John incautiously.

"Ah! English—good. Very well—all right. I wished to say that monsieur has marched on my foot."

John knew that this was a lie. He had not marched on anyone's foot. But he made a concession; with a condescending nod and smile he said:

"*Merci!*"

He meant to say "*Pardon.*" But "*merci*" and "*pardon*" were very much mixed up in his mind; he often used one instead of the other.

The very foreign person said with a bow:

"I cannot but think that the act was intentioned on the part of monsieur."

"Go away, will you?" said John Hardy.

"But monsieur has not answered my question."

"Yes, I have. Be good enough to go to the devil."

"To the—? Very well—all right." And at once he lifted his voice high, interrupting the orator, crying out:

"*Voilà, messieurs—un Anglais—de la Marine Anglaise——*"

John had committed the indiscretion of wearing his mariner pea-jacket, with brass buttons engraved with anchors.

There arose an outcry round him. A commotion spreading wider through the crowd, like circles round a pebble-splash in water, had him for its centre. M. Zola ceased to hold forth.

They pressed round stiflingly. John began to cough feebly. He pushed back with his elbow a rough-looking, brazen-eyed fellow in an *ouvrier's* smock. But his effort to free himself was poor in force. In a moment or two his jacket was rent off him, and a cruel fist smote him heavily in the jaw. He saw clearly now that he was on the point of being torn to pieces.

He wondered what he could do, and having calmly measured the situation and seeing no chance of escape, he broke into a laugh at his own expense, calling out loudly:

"*Cochers! Cochers!*"

By "*cochers*" he meant to call them "pigs," but, of course, only called them "cabmen."

In a moment he was on the ground on his back.

But whatever Force it is which underlies the world, had this frail and dauntless lad in its keeping for the time being. He was necessary to the future.

A diversion was caused by a loud pair of lungs, which cried:

"*Mais, messieurs, écoutez-moi, écoutez-moi——*"

It was the very foreign person, who was also vehemently interposing his utmost bodily vigour to the rescue of John.

"You know me—you know me all—listen to me—I am Edropol——"

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"*C'est Edropol! Edropol!*"

Instantly the rumour spread far, amid "*Vive!*" Edropol, the duellist, the Bulgarian, the world-renowned master of the pistol and the rapier; it was he.

He explained. The English sailor had committed upon him a personal outrage. He begged—it was his simple right—that the life of the miscreant should be spared to make the *réparation* which was only his, Edropol's, plain due. The stranger's death was certain either way, but, in short, messieurs, the other way was more neat—more *convenable*.

And so John Hardy was, as it were, torn from the rough hands which had seized him. Edrapol's popularity in Paris was paramount. The mob, led by Zola, rushed westwards. Hardy and Edropol were alone.

The *escrimeur*, bowing, handed his card to Hardy, and requested a return of the favour.

"What for?" said John. "I have no card."

"But monsieur will meet me?"

"Where?"

"In the Bois, monsieur."

"But what for?"

"Why, to fight, monsieur."

"You don't mean a duel?"

"Why, naturally, monsieur."

"I see. But an old man like you?"

"Not *too* old, monsieur, perhaps! Does monsieur, then, hesitate?"

"I do. It is absurd."

"Monsieur is, of course, alive to the interpretation which would naturally be put upon any hesitation on his part?"

"No. I am not alive to it. What interpretation?"

"That monsieur is a coward."

"Well, but I am not one, interpret as you please."

"Still, monsieur, I say the *natural* interpretation. I am sure you will recognise my point of view if you recollect that I have the reputation of being the deadliest swordsman in Europe."

"Is that so? Oh, I didn't know."

"Now I think that monsieur realises my point of view?"

"I do, rather."

"And monsieur will now fight?"

"I don't mind. What with?"

"All that will be arranged for us by others, monsieur. If you will give me your name, your address, and the address of a friend to whom I may send a friend of mine——"

"I have no friend worth mentioning here. Send your friend to me personally."

He gave his real name and his address, and turned away from the bowing figure before him. He set out for his hotel.

Later in the day he found himself in front of the Chambre des Députés, and dropped in with a stream of the public.

A glance round the Chamber showed a very full house, a first-night sort of audience in the balconies—Zola, Papa Sardou, the new popular novelist, Pierre Louys—and the Parisian pressmen, packed beyond breathing power, overflowing into the foreign press reserves.

A picturesque assembly below. No dull uniformity, as in the House of Commons, but variety, shades of colour, contrast of race. There is M. Grenier, the Mussulman deputy, in his white Arabian burnous, near the "passage of the Left." The Left—the Socialists—are in force, many of the members carelessly leaning against the light balustrade flanking their end of the "hemi-cycle."

The Centre is packed—Republicans and Opportunists—Government supporters all these. The Right is the stronghold of the Clericals and Legitimists, led by the Abbé Lemire; and here, too, no seat is vacant.

"Ah, monsieur a marché sur mon pied."

Situated in the centre of the circle is the tribune, from which speeches are made; it is ascended by a number of steps—a real pulpit; and behind the tribune, but towering above it, is the high throne of the President of the Chamber, M. Brisson.

M. Brisson wears no wig like our Speaker; but his stern countenance and patriarchal beard are full of majesty.

M. Hanotaux, in the Tribune, is explaining in his fine, suave, diplomatic manner, that "nothing in the actual situation is so far of importance in obviating the annihilation of the British Empire in the near future!"

Furious applause from Centre and Right. Queer ominous sounds from the Left. As sure as there is a sun in the heavens there is going to be a row.

M. Hanotaux is determined. He fully intends to say what he has to say. "It is a coalition whose very name is Victory."

"It has already been defeated!" yells a voice from the Left. (Huge, universal hubbub; M. Jaurès bouncing up and down on his seat; M. Clovis Hugues, the long-haired poet, hurling his arms like a windmill.)

President Brisson rises. For a few moments the uproar continues; but the President, with his commanding voice, calls upon them to recollect that the country looks to them to give the example of calm and sage deliberation. "*Délibération calme et sage!*"

John Hardy hears the words, and understands them, because they are exactly like English words, and he throws a gasp of laughter behind his head, crying: "By the Lord!"

M. Hanotaux proceeds, though interrupted by wild cries. He has often seen the like in that Chamber. In his peroration he makes a fine appeal to the interests that are above party, to the honour, the glory of France. Applause from the Centre and Right; the Left dumb. M. Hanotaux descends slowly.

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From the Left there comes a cry of "Jaurès! Jaurès!" And the young leader of the Socialists, tall, blonde, broad-shouldered, swings himself up to the Tribune. He proceeds to hurl a string of personal insults at the Centre and Right. "Hanotaux is an *infame*. France has been made the tool of Russia and Germany!" President Brisson rises and calls the speaker to order. Jaurès gives no sign that he hears; there is deaf obstinacy in the curve of the broad back which he turns towards the President. He singles out M. de Mun, the orator of the Catholics, for his fiercest invective. M. de Mun retorts furiously. The two men glare at each other. Like a ball flung from hand to hand, so the stinging and witty retort darts quickly to and back between them. The Socialists egg on their men with cries, the Right their man.

The air is charged with lightning. A voice from the Right: "You are the paid spy of the British Rothschilds!" It is Count de Bernis who speaks, a deeply-bronzed man, moustached, looking like an old captain of Cuirassiers. "You are a liar and a coward!" roars M. Jaurès.

There is a swaying struggle on the front Right benches. It is De Bernis held back by his friends. The air is electrical. The journalists in their compartments stand up and yell out their own various views of things.

Suddenly, from the Left, a strange figure makes a sort of reeling run like a drunken man. He seems to be running for the exit. He dodges the stray members on the floor, then wheels round and fetches De Bernis a swinging blow.

Ha! sits the air *so* then? John Hardy chortles loud, rearing with glee. The attendants rush in and seize the assaulter. In the passage leading from the Right to the lobbies there is a swaying scrimmage. On the Right benches there is another, of which De Bernis is the centre. Suddenly there is a break away from this group, a swift figure darts up the steps of the Tribune, and in a moment the Count de Bernis has given Jaurès a terrible blow under the ear. He quickly and guiltily descends, while the blonde giant reels as though he would fall down the opposite stairs.

In a moment he was on the ground on his back.

Then all is chaos. Everybody is rushing everywhere. Wherever anyone sees a head, he drives his fist at it, yelling like a maniac. The whole Chamber rolls and tumbles in a whirlwind of tumult. They are like bits of vegetables wheeling promiscuously in a boiling and bubbling pot. President Brisson, calm, but laden with sorrow, puts on his tall hat as a sign that the *séance* is at an end. The *mêlée* forces itself out into the lobbies. The attendants clear the galleries. Outside there is a clash of drawn swords; a sound of pistols. John Hardy has seen—France.

Meantime, all over the city the garrison of Paris was in the streets, trying to clear them of the rioters. Night fell.

At eight o'clock a gentleman waited upon Hardy from Edrapol. But he could not speak English, and the interview was a fiasco. Hardy sat down and wrote the following letter, which he handed to Edrapol's second to bear to him:

Sir,—This is to let you know that after consideration, I have changed my mind about the duel for the present. If you like to think I am afraid of your fine swordsmanship, you can, but that is not really the case. On the contrary, when I tell you my motives, you ought to consider the writing of this letter, if anything, a rather brave and worthy act on my part. The fact is, I am a servant of Her Majesty the Queen, and have already in my humble way been able to do some good for my country. As you know, England wants men just now, and that is why, after consideration, I do not see my way to expose my life wantonly, while things are as they are, for a mere trifle. I am sorry to have to disapoint (*sic*) you, and myself too, in our little duel; but that is how I look at it. However, I make you this promise: that on the day this present war is over, I will seek you out, in whatever country you may be, and present myself before you for the purpose of getting through with our little duel; and on that you may rely. I keep your card.

I remain, sir,
Your servant,
John Hardy.

The amount of self-suppression, and of noble patriotism which the writing of this simply-worded, but great, letter

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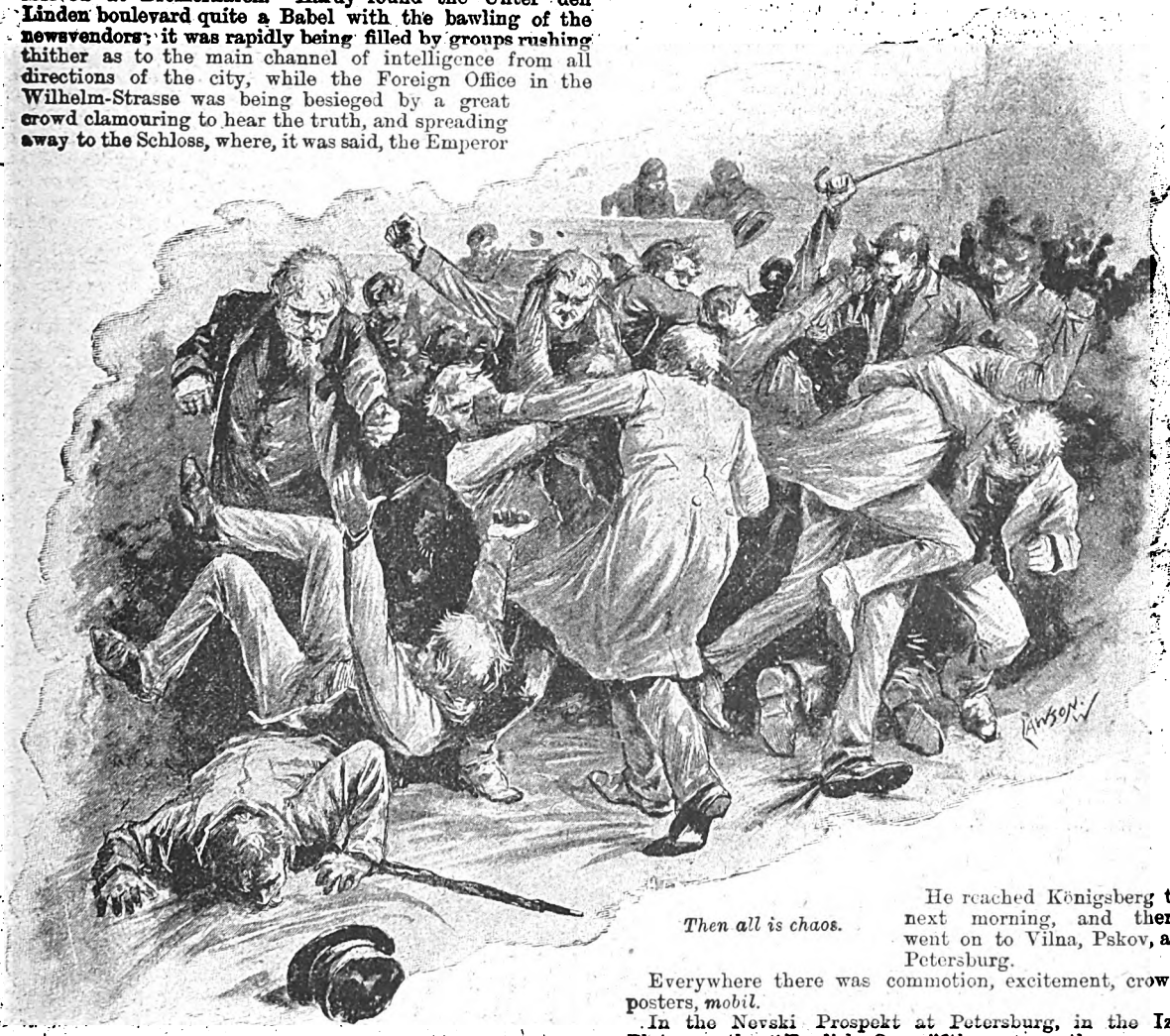
implied for the arrogant spirit of John Hardy may be guessed; when it was finished, he flung it with a curl of the lip, and without a word, before the ambassador of Edropol.

The next morning he left Paris, and reached Aix in the evening, whence he proceeded to Berlin. To Berlin the bare news of the disaster had been flashed the day before; but it was not until the next morning that more detailed accounts came from the two ruined battleships, now arrived at Bremerhafen. Hardy found the Unter den Linden boulevard quite a Babel with the bawling of the newsvendors; it was rapidly being filled by groups rushing thither as to the main channel of intelligence from all directions of the city, while the Foreign Office in the Wilhelm-Strasse was being besieged by a great crowd clamouring to hear the truth, and spreading away to the Schloss, where, it was said, the Emperor was closeted with his Chancellor and his Chief of the Staff. The humour of the crowd was sullen; but it needed only the appearance of Wilhelm, accompanied by the Empress, on the front balcony of the Schloss, to turn discouragement into elation. Wilhelm suddenly drew his sword, and flashed it in the sunlight. Then there was joy. No nation under the sun can cheer like the Germans. Demonstration is their *specialité*. They excel in looking pleased. Their *forte* is to claim the Future with verve and assurance, whether it really belongs to them on not. John Hardy was in the midst of the crowd round the Schloss. He saw the flash of Wilhelm's sword. An hour later he was with the crowd cheering itself hoarse in front of the Austrian Embassy, opposite the old home of M. Benedetti, so closely associated with the outbreak of Germany's '70 war. The Austrian Minister had unexpectedly appeared before the people, who now went wild, a large area of the crowd presently starting to sing old Schneckenburger's "*Wacht. am Rhein.*" John Hardy observed every gesture, and every expression of every face which came within his range of vision, and he said to himself:

"So much for mein Herr, then."



Then all is chaos.

He reached Königsberg th next morning, and thenc went on to Vilna, Pskov, an Petersburg.

Everywhere there was commotion, excitement, crowds posters, *mobil*.

In the Nevski Prospekt at Petersburg, in the Iza Platz, on the "English Quay," there were throngs, pro clamations, and printed heads of the Tsar, and every ope space was gaudy with banners. The town, however, wa fairly quiet, though there were some arrests of Nihilist The Russians were the most English of the Continentals, tended to be so, when once their various races became mor homogeneous. They had the ruralness, and something the stoicism, the Puritanism, and the nimbleness of th British; with this was mixed a certain Orientalism— vermilion streak in the grey of their character.

At his hotel John found an ostler of the Simbir Province, an adventurous and cosmopolitan man, who ha been a sailor trading between Hull and Copenhagen f some years. He understood English. He struck up friendship with John, and told him his history. Joh

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offered him 500 roubles if he would undertake to deliver a letter by hand in England, setting out at once. And this offer Ivan accepted.

The letter which John wrote was as follows:

My Dear Bobbie,—Here I am in Petersburg, after passing through France and Germany, and just about to set out to get by the Trans-Siberian Railway over all that great continent of Northern Asia to Vladivostock (*sic*) on the other side of the world, and so, please God, to Pekin, and my ship.

Dear Bobbie, this is what I have to tell you, and you can write a letter to the *Times* yourself, so as to let the country know what little I have to say. The French are about to mass four Army Corps in the direction of Havre, and I don't think that for the present we can do much with them there, though later on, when we get our pecker up a bit, I know that ten Frenchmen won't be able to hold out against one Englishman. The German Cock-of-the-walk has telegraphed for the King of Saxony, and Prince Albrect of Prussia, his Field-Marshals, and for Count Waldersee, Chief of the General Staff. Seven of his twenty Army Corps are mobilising, namely, the 1st, or East Prussian; the 17th, or West Prussian; the 12th, Kingdom of Saxony; and the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th, belonging to Brandenburg, the Province of Prussian Saxony, Posen, and Silesia, respectively. But whether all these are intended to go to help the French, or to defend his own northern coast, or what, I do not know, not knowing much about fighting on *terra firma*.

Well, dear Bobbie, I have seen my full of the people among whom I have been. I saw some splendid fisticuffs in the French House of Commons, and no end of fun; and some very excited people in Germany and Russia. My opinion of the French is, that they are very nice people, the French women especially. But they are *old*, they are no good any more, they have not got any youth and go left in them; you know what they are like, Bobbie? like *pattê (sic) de foie gras*, nice, but tainted. They are over-civilised, like an old Dowager that's not fit for anything, but to make love-matches. France is no good any more, except for ornament, and for tourists to come to. For energy she has got vivacity, and for nerve, vervo—like a frivolous old *beau*. The world has nothing to expect from her. They are wonderfully ahead of us in some things—their lower class especially is far, far ahead of ours in everything—but they do not move, their legs are heavy with age. The future belongs to *us*. At the rate we are going now, we shall soon have all that France has, and a thousand thousand times more, for we shall have youth, and energy, and vastness as well. The Germans are a young nation, and they have all the enthusiasm of a young nation, and they will go ahead perhaps, alright (*sic*). But they have not got anything in reserve, Bobbie. Frothy, enthusiastic and young, too, but not very strong. I think the Russians would make mincemeat of the Germans, just as the Germans would of the poor pretty French. But the Russians are raw, new, and not, I don't think, a nation at all. Not one of them is the chosen race, dear Bobbie, "*the peculiar people.*" If you want to find that, I think you had better look nearer home.

Well, no more at present. I shall expect you to take good care of yourself, mind, while I am away, so that I shall find you hale and hearty when I come back, if I ever do. Don't be getting up too early in the mornings, now; and don't forget your bottle of porter regularly every night, as something is wanted at your time of life.

With love to Bobbie, from his son,

John Hardy.

From this letter it will be seen that John Hardy could not only express his ideas clearly, and with point, though in the simplest Saxony, but that he possessed a large tract of brain, capable of taking in the world, and summing it up, and passing judgment upon it, "as one having authority."

The letter reached England three weeks later, and could not escape the keen scent of the pressmen. It was published bodily in all the papers, bad spelling and all, the public gloating joyfully over its wisdom, its humour, and its unaffected simplicity.

All this time John was travelling, partly by train and partly by camel caravan, towards his fate in the capital of China.

(*To be continued.*)

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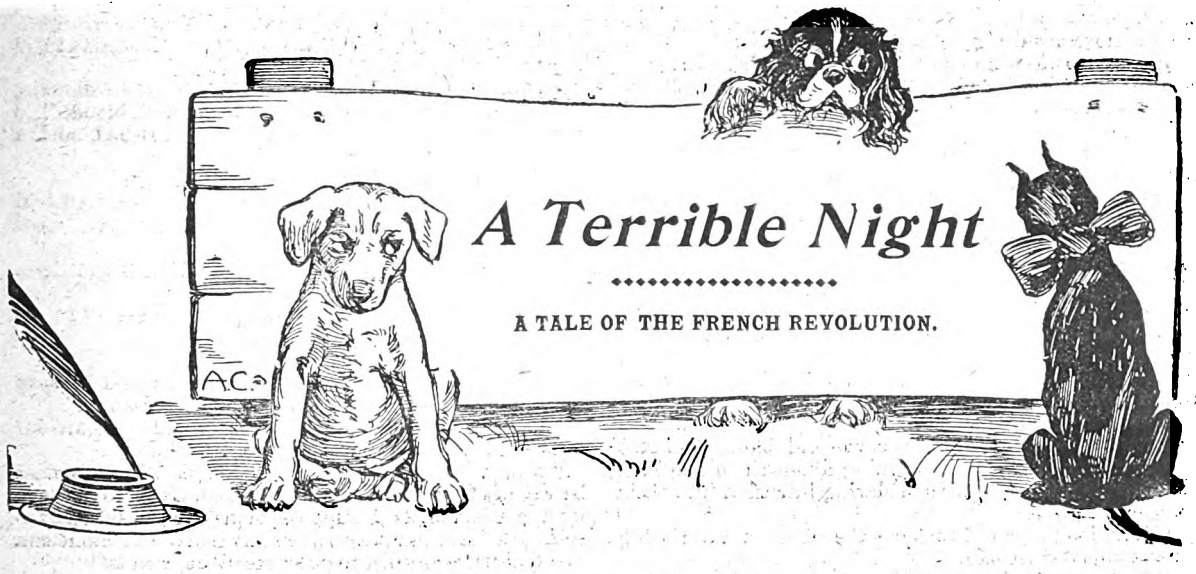

A Terrible Night

A TALE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

"Mademoiselle, Raynal has returned!"

"Returned! Where is he? Let him come here at once!"

"He is waiting outside, if Mademoiselle pleases."

The speakers were two girls, one, a serving-maid, and on the heels of the latter, a shock-headed man, half forester, half farm-servant, enters.

"Did you see my father?" asked the young lady quickly.

"Yes, Mademoiselle; he rides towards Saverdun, where he is to meet Monsieur André, and they hope to cross the mountains to-morrow."

"Did you meet any of the Jacobins?"

"None. I kept to the woods. But they say there are bands roving all about, swearing that the seigneurs are plotting to bring down the Austrians and the brigands, and destroy everything, and vowing that they will not leave an aristocrat alive."

"Enough! Did my father or—or Monsieur André send no message?"

"M. le Comte bade me say that he committed Mademoiselle to the care of the good God, and Monsieur André sent his most respectful farewell, and he gave me this note—it is not for mademoiselle"—as the girl held out her hand and as quickly withdrew it—"but to take to M. Latreille."

"Very well; hasten then!" said his young mistress, turning away to the fire-place as the servant left the room.

She stood before the fire and mused, staring into it with her hands lightly clasped in front of her, and listening to the howl of the keen February wind as it rushed over the whole tower. She was not much afraid of the Jacobin mobs, although it was the year 1792, when the peasants of Languedoc were mad with panic, fears of the reactionaries and the plots of the dethroned seigneurs. The de Lussacs were only small nobles, very poor, and had been on good terms with their dependents; and the Château de Lussac (an old grange with one tower of the ancient fortress still standing) was out of the way, and little visited. But she had heard enough of the events of the past three years to make her feel anxious and lonely, and she thought that her father, or perhaps her cousin André, might have sent her a further message.

She sighed, walked to the window, and looked out The view was fine; and the window commanded the road for a long way—right away to the pine-wood in the far distance, over which the sun was now setting.

Something was moving on the road just outside the pines. What was it? She stared at it absently, and then looked more attentively. It was a black mass with a few glitters of light here and there; but it would have to come a quarter of a mile nearer before anything would show distinctly; and the level rays of the fast-sinking sun blinded her.

She left the window and called her maid, who came at once.

"Rosine, you have a keen sight. What is that moving on the road near the woods?"

"I cannot tell, Mademoiselle; the sun is so bright." Then, with a scream, "Ah, it is the Jacobins. There is one on horseback. And, see, the sun glitters on their spikes. Quick, Mademoiselle, quick; let us hide in the upper woods. They will kill us both, and burn the château as they burnt La Liassac."

Her mistress turned pale for a moment. Then the slender throat lifted, and the girl's delicate lineaments hardened as all the pride of her fiery ancestry came to her aid.

"You can go if you are afraid, Rosine; I shall not leave the château! My father left it in my charge."

"But, Mademoiselle, we shall be murdered! And only we two here."

"I repeat that I permit you to go," returned her mistress coldly.

"Of course I will not leave, Mademoiselle; but, Holy Virgin, what will come of us?" cried the pretty country girl, wide-eyed with terror.

"Silence, then, and do as I bid you. They will be here presently. Go down and open the great door, and remember, on your life, you know nothing of my father."

A short while after, as Alais de Lussac stood at the head of the steps leading to the tower door, a mob of thirty or forty people surged up to the château and

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halted abruptly as it saw the slight figure, quiet, firm, and unmoved, waiting to receive it. They were all on foot—for Rosine's man on horseback had disappeared—some women, most were peasants evidently, with stupid faces, debased further by fear and the cruelty which is bred from fear; but there was a sprinkling of men and boys from the neighbouring small town, and these looked to Alais the more dangerous.

There was a confused outcry from many voices: "Where is Lussac?" "He is a traitor!" "He is intriguing with the Austrians!" "The Royalists are coming from Jales to burn us all in our beds!"

A burly and brutal-looking butcher from the town stepped to the front.

"Silence, all you," he said, "and put guards round the house! Now, pretty one, we will come into that old Bastille of yours, and if you answer all questions no harm shall befall you."

The girl looked at him steadily and coldly, and without a word retreated into the old hall. The rest followed her in, and stood looking about them stupidly, half afraid even now of their daring intrusion into their seigneur's house.

Alais' look seemed to have the effect of infuriating the savage spokesman.

"Here, girl!" he shouted to the shrinking Rosine, "bring us food, we're hungry, and this dainty aristocrat shall dine with a peasant for once."

"It will not be the first time I've eaten with a peasant," said Alais, "as Pierre Leroux there knows," and she pointed to a man who slunked back ashamed, for she had nursed his sick wife.

"Enough clatter!" shouted the butcher. "Now answer me true. Where is the traitor Lussac?"

"My father, M. le Comte de Lussac," said Alais, "is not here; and if I knew where he was I would not tell you."

"It is false; she does know," said a voice behind; "Raynal brought her a letter from her father only an hour since."

"There, little fool," said the butcher, "you are caught, you see. Tell me now, or it will be worse for you."

"I will tell you nothing," said the girl bravely. She was pale as May bloom. She had made up her mind that she would have to die for her father's safety; but she buried her hand in the bosom of her dress, for she meant to die in her own way.

A tumult of cries and savage ejaculations arose, in the midst of which the butcher said:

"See, pretty one, you don't know Michel Lemoine. We shall soon see if you are so obstinate. Here, some of you, go and get a good bunch of withes whilst we strip off that fine gown, and we will see if an aristocrat's back will bear stripes as well as a poor devil of a peasant's."

Alais still stood pale and defiant, and as several rushed forward to seize her, she drew a little stiletto from her breast and said:

"If you touch me, I will kill myself!"

A clatter of horse's hoofs outside, and a man entered hurriedly. The new comer was in the dress of a gentleman, tall, dark, and harsh-featured.

"What is all this?" he said. He listened quietly to a babel of explanations, and then said, "Such sharp measures will not be necessary. Mademoiselle will no doubt listen to reason; I will speak to her alone." And he led the way to an inner room.

"Why alone?" burst out Lemoine. "What is all this plotting for? These Lussacs are all aristocracts. If you let her go I will see that the Commissioners know it."

The butcher's words were taken up by his followers, who seemed now fairly thirsting for the girl's blood. The uncouth weapons they carried were flourished, and a ring of angry faces turned on the stranger.

He faced them and said, still quite quietly:

"I am responsible to the Commissioners, and will answer to them. You see we cannot leave this room without your knowledge."

He let Alais pass into the room and shut the door, and they faced each other,

"Mademoiselle is in great danger," he said. "I have come to save her."

She glanced suspiciously at him.

"I do not know you, monsieur. But as you seem to have influence over these people, send them away."

"I cannot do that. To attempt it would cost both our lives—except under one condition."

"And that condition, I suppose, is that I should betray my father? A worthy proposal, truly, to be made by a gentleman, as I suppose monsieur considers himself. I have already given my answer, monsieur. We had better return to your excellent friends."

"Mademoiselle has not done me the honour to hear me out," he replied with a trace of anger in his voice. "I am no gentleman, but plain Bermond Gourdon, bookseller, of Bourg-Desnay. But I had no thought of imposing such a condition."

"What then?"

He seemed to find a difficulty in replying, or even looking at Alais, who faced him with every faculty at the fullest stretch. At last he spoke:

"Mademoiselle, the only way is for you to consent to marry me. Nay, hear me," as she started back, "it is true I am no gentleman, but I love you—have loved you long—though you have known nothing of me. I am all unworthy of you, yet in some way not so unequal as you believe. I have learnt such things as your associates know."

He was actually proceeding in his agitation to a foolish catalogue of his capabilities, but stopped short, and the girl burst in:

"Marry you! Marry you! You must be mad!"

"Mad I am; yet if Mademoiselle would but deign, these distinctions are now done with."

"I, a de Lussac, marry a tradesman, the leader of a Jacobin rabble! Monsieur, my family have known how to die, but not how to endure disgrace."

She gazed wildly about her like a trapped animal, and wrung her hands. Not all the excitement of the past hour had so moved her! The horror of it all was that the man, she could see, meant all he said. His very gesture and look and the working of his dark face

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showed it. But he recovered himself and stopped her.

"Calm yourself, Mademoiselle. I will urge you no more," he said bitterly. "It was a foolish dream; and yet, if you will believe it, even a tradesman can feel the worst part of his failure to be that he seemed to force what should come of liking. But now what will you do? These people seek your life."

"Let them have it! Call them in, and let them see how little I fear them."

* * * * *

A cry outside in the court.

"To arms! The Royalists! In the woods towards Latrielle! Quick! Quick!"

Then a scurry of feet, a clatter on the road, and all was still. They looked out. The hall was empty and silent, but out of the darkness which had now fallen outside could be heard cries growing fainter and fainter.

"Mademoiselle," said Gourdon, "your safety comes from another hand. You can now escape if you wish, though I think they will not return."

A man cautiously entered. It was Raynal.

"Aha! that was a good idea," he said. "I've sent them on a fine wild-goose chase."

Another footstep at the door, and in rushed Lemoine.

"Have you, you rascal!" he thundered. "And you, my little bookseller! So you were going to let your girl escape! I arrest you—all three!"

He advanced on Gourdon, who stepped back. There was a crack of a pistol, and the butcher fell back with his head blown in pieces.

"Take that carrion away and hide it quickly," said Gourdon to Raynal. "Farewell, Mademoiselle, and forgive me."

Alais seemed not to hear him. She swayed heavily where she stood, and would have fallen to the ground if Gourdon had not caught her. She was in a dead faint. Gourdon laid her down and stood looking at her as Rosine rushed in to her. Then he stopped, lifted her hand and kissed it reverently, and cut a ribbon from her dress.

"Tell her she is safe, and will see me no more," he said, and was gone.

* * * * *

Seven years passed by and Alais had lived on the château a still life, unmoved by all that happened in France. The Monarchy had fallen, the Revolution perished. She had heard that the château had been sold, but no one had disturbed her, and she lived there, for she had nowhere else to go. Of Gourdon she had heard nothing. Then her cousin André returned with the other emigrants, by the permission of Napoleon. He brought her a dying father's message that they should marry, and she became the wife of the man she had always loved.

On the eve of her wedding-day she heard that a sick soldier wished to see her. She went with her husband to a cottage near by, and there, on his death-bed, lay Gourdon. On a chair by the bed was the uniform of a a colonel in the French Army! The dying man's face lighted up.

"You have come," he said. "I knew I should see you once more. I have something to give back. I bought the château when it was sold by the Convention. It is yours again. See!" He fumbled beneath the pillow and produced a paper. "Take it," he said; "take it as a tradesman's gift—even he can give; yes, and fight. See! I earned my rank!" And he pointed to his uniform. A ribbon fell from the papers. He grasped it. "Not that, not that; that I keep." He started up wildly, and fell back dead.

"He was not a bad fellow, *ma mie*," said André to his wife; "and we will forgive his presumption for the sake of his gift. Really, a very proper feeling."

Alais looked at him. Perhaps just then she learnt a lesson—as most of us learn them—too late.

Winifred Scott.

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There was so much talk about Professor Chesney before he arrived that Larry declared herself sick of the subject. Augusta, having spent several weeks in his company the previous summer at the house of their mutual friend, Mrs. Marston, felt she had a prior right to him. "A primary mortgage on him," Larry said, in her girlish impertinence. Gertrude, who had met him several times, and who was considered very clever, called him a "congenial spirit." Mrs. Austin, knowing his social standing and large income, declared him "a model man, one in a thousand." Mr. Austin pronounced him "an up-and-down good fellow." Even Jim Annsley, their cousin and adopted brother, expressed approbation of him.

Larry was the only one of the family who had not met him, and with her usual perversity made up her mind not to like him. He was learned in mathematics, which only scored against him in her eyes.

"The calculating power alone should seem to be the least of human qualities," she quoted, her small nose in the air. "There is something wrong about a man whom everybody likes. My prophetic soul tells me I shall not take to him, at least."

"Your 'prophetic soul' makes mistakes sometimes," put in Jim wickedly. "I've no doubt you'll succumb to his charms before he has been here a week. But, for sisterly affection's sake, don't interfere; give Augusta a chance."

"Don't alarm yourself!" cried Larry loftily. "I'm not susceptible, and dried-up, fusty old professors don't appeal to me in the slightest. I shall be truly thankful when this wonderful 'Admirable Crichton' has been and gone. I'm positively sick of the sound of his name."

"Professor Chesney is certainly a wonderful man," began Jim sententiously; but Larry at once pounced on him and he was ignominiously put to flight.

The Wednesday the professor was expected, Larry went for a long walk; she met Ned Erskine and Harry Winthrop, two young artists with whom she was good friends, and enjoyed herself very much, getting in barely in time to dress for dinner. They were all assembled round the table when she slipped into her place, and there was a reproof in her mother's voice as she said:

"My third daughter, Larinda, Professor Chesney."

If there was anything that her "third daughter" hated, it was being addressed by her baptismal name. With a mutinous pout of her red under lip, she bowed hastily, and it was not until she had disposed of her soup that she looked at her opposite neighbour. A tall, thin man with brown hair and a short brown beard and moustache thickly streaked with grey, a large, dome-like forehead, and near-sighted grey eyes that looked kindly at her through his spectacles.

He was a little surprised at the hostile expression in the brilliant brown eyes, which surprise deepened into astonishment when, in answer to a low-voiced remark from Jim, the young lady replied, also in a low voice, but so distinctly that he heard every word:

"I think he is an old fossil!"

Notwithstanding this, several times during the meal his eyes strayed to the white-robed figure, the bent, shining brown head, and once, in the midst of a remark from Augusta, he turned quickly to listen to a peal of merry laughter from Larry.

Several of her friends came in during the evening, and she devoted herself to their entertainment, completely ignoring the Professor. When she had kept up this behaviour for nearly a week, it attracted the attention of her family as well as that of the visitor, and when gentle hints were scorned, Larry was severely reprimanded.

"You are positively unladylike!" said Mrs. Austin; "and I insist on, at least, civility. He must think you an ill-mannered child."

"I dare say I do seem a child to his advanced years," saucily answered Larry.

"But what is your objection to him?" asked her mother. "To me he appears a most kindly, estimable gentleman——"

"Ugh!" cried her spoilt daughter with a gesture of deep disgust. "If there is one thing that I despise more

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than another, it is that word 'estimable,' as applied to people. Call them good, bad, weak, strong, brave, cowardly—anything but 'estimable.'"

"You are exceedingly impertinent!" answered Mrs. Austin, who was now very angry. "I insist on your being polite to Professor Chesney, and doing your share towards entertaining him, or I shall certainly complain of you to your father. Leave the room, miss."

A little ashamed and wholly angry, Larry whisked out of the room, almost into the Professor's arms, with such force as to rather stagger him. With a hasty "Excuse me," she sped along the corridor and up the stairs, while the "estimable gentleman" stood and looked after her.

"An old fossil!" he murmured, with a faint smile, stroking his beard.

Shortly after this, to the surprise of all, Larry suddenly changed her tactics, and at dinner one day addressed the Professor. He answered courteously, and very readily joined in an argument between herself and Jim. Her remarks were bright and amusing, if somewhat crude, and the brown eyes and changeful face were very attractive. In the evening she played and sang for him, and was as sweet and bewitching as the heart of man could desire, much to the surprise of some, and the annoyance of others, of her family.

"She means mischief!" thought Jim uneasily. "Are you beginning to succumb to the Professor's charms?" he whispered. "You know I gave you a week."

"I am thinking of getting up a collection of fossils," she answered, with a mocking laugh, "and this is too fine a specimen to lose. Don't you dare interfere."

"Poor wretch!" rejoined Jim. "He has my sympathy."

Unable to account for the change in Larry's manner, the Professor, nevertheless, found her very agreeable; and, though never neglecting anyone else, it soon became evident that she was the attraction. The other two reluctantly gave way to her, and she it was who went with him to picture galleries and lectures and concerts, who was the life of theatre and opera parties, saucy, wilful, charming.

With all his gravity and erudition, it was plain that he admired this ill-regulated young woman. He had never before been thrown closely into companionship with such a nature; he admired her beauty, her dainty costumes; even her girlish extravagance of speech and saucy disregard of his opinion pleased him better than Augusta's unvarying politeness, or Gertrude's cleverness. His eyes followed her every movement, a wistful light in them sometimes that touched Jim.

"He's in for a severe attack, I'm afraid," he thought. "Bad taste to take late in life," and went off whistling:

> Two bright eyes 'neath a scarlet hood,
> One beguiling, and one beguiled.

* * * * *

Larry was curled up in a deep window-sill overlooking the park, basking in the sun, for she was a veritable Persian in her love of sunlight, when Professor Chesney came into the room. He leant against the side of the window, looking at the picture she made in her quaint puffed and furbelowed gown, the sunlight falling on her brown head.

Larry looked up, nodded with a smile that showed her small white teeth, and settled back into her original position, waiting for him to speak; and so he did, after a while, but not as she expected.

"I am going away to-morrow, Miss Larry," he said. "My pleasant visit has come to an end all too soon."

"To-morrow?" echoed the girl, sitting up straight. "I am very sorry you are going." And much to her surprise, she realised that the remark was perfectly sincere.

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the Professor, trying to keep his voice steady. "It makes it a little easier to say something that is in my heart."

Then he told his story in warm, eager words, very unlike his usual calm ones—words that stirred Larry strangely. There was a queer expression on her pale face as she stood before him.

"Professor Chesney," she said with quivering lips, "I am not worth the love you have offered me. You'll realise that when I tell you I have only been pleasant and civil to you all these weeks, not from any liking of you, but to plague the others."

Thoroughly ashamed she bent her head, unable to meet his eyes.

"You mean that you have deliberately played a part all these weeks? You, whom I thought so frank and true? How could you do it? Then you've not the slightest love for me in your heart—that, I suppose, is out of the question?"

There was a hurt, shocked tone in his voice that touched Larry keenly.

"I don't love you," she answered, "but I shall be very grateful, if, after what I have told you, you will let me be your friend."

She put out her hands and moved a step nearer to him, but, to her mortification, her extended hands remained untouched.

"I did not ask for your friendship," he said unsteadily, "and just at present I want only what I ask for. By-and-bye I may be able to appreciate your offer; I shall try, but you've taught me a hard lesson, Larry, one I'm not likely to forget. Perhaps I ought to have known better, but," with a break in his voice, "I'm not used to women—I'm only an old fossil, after all." And without another word he left her.

Up in her room Larry was still more surprised to find a fit of crying necessary. She could not account for the unhappy feeling that took possession of her as she reviewed the past weeks and realised that the kindly, pleasant companionship she had accepted so heedlessly was at an end.

"I suppose he'll hate me now and for ever," she

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thought, between her sobs. "But how could I say I loved him when I didn't?"

"Mistress Mary, quite contrary," mocked a parrot in the next room.

"He was so hurt. I wonder if he'll ever forgive me?"

"Contrary, quite contrary," shrieked the parrot, with such force that it sounded positively personal to conscience-stricken Larry.

"Fiendish bird!" she cried, "I wish some boy would wring its neck."

Then she sobbed all the harder.

The Professor left the next afternoon, while Larry was out. A box of white roses lay on the table addressed to her, a card attached, on which was written: "From your friend Roger Chesney;" that was all, but she guessed dimly what an effort it cost to write it. With trembling fingers she made three parts of the flowers, and gave them to her mother and sisters.

"I don't want them," she said proudly in answer to her mother's remonstrance. "I was only civil to him to please you all."

Jim noticed that the brilliant eyes were full of tears, and that she took the card away with her.

"It must be a relief to you to have him gone," he said as they stood for a moment in the hall. "Association with such a serious man must have been a trial to you."

He was unprepared for the way she flamed out at him.

"Such a trial as makes me more willing to accept the statement that man is made after God's own image, and possesses some godlike attributes. Now go!"

And he did, a lurking smile under his moustache and a most emphatic "By Jove!" upon his lips.

* * * * *

One bright morning early in June, Jim opened the door of Mrs. Austin's sitting-room. Larry was there alone. She had an industrious fit on her, and with the sleeves of her blue morning dress turned back, displaying two prettily-rounded arms, feather duster in hand, she was whisking the dust off some rare old pieces of china.

"Larry, here is an old friend of yours," Jim announced. "Treat him well, for he sails for the Cape to-morrow, never to return. I'll be back in a minute."

He vanished; and there inside the closed door stood Professor Chesney—thinner, greyer, but with the old kindly smile on his lips that she remembered so well. Startled out of her self-possession, Larry stood with her duster suspended over grandma's hundred-year-old teapot.

"I sail for the Cape to-morrow," said the Professor, taking a few steps into the room, "and I may never return. Won't you wish me God-speed, Larry?"

Crash went grandma's priceless teapot in a dozen pieces on the polished floor, and the next thing Larry knew she was crying.

The Professor approached her.

"Are you crying because I am going away, or because you have broken the teapot?" asked the visitor.

"Both!" cried Larry, with a convulsive sob which was smothered in the folds of the Professor's coat, as the arms of that "estimable" gentleman closed round her.

"How about your prophetic soul, Larry?" Jim asked later on. "I thought you called him a fossil?"

"So I did," answered the young lady quite unabashed. "But I also said I was getting up a collection of fossils, and recognised the fact that he was too fine a specimen to lose. Don't you remember?"

H. P. T.

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When old John Menard died, people came far and wide to look at the low, long building—a modern roof built on a battered stone edifice of the sixteenth century. A more modern blacksmith's shop had been built on at one end whose doors had long been closed. A solitary pine tree, half dead and beaten by a century of storms, lifted its black crest close by, and a waterfall, hidden in evergreen woods, came muttering slowly over the rocks in the rear. People talked in whispers about there being a ghost on the premises. Doctors shook their heads and said that the bad drainage was enough to make a churchyard full of the sheeted and shrouded gentry. Artists on the staff of illustrated newspapers came there to sketch the ruined buildings as the oldest in the country, and burglars slyly ransacked the place at due intervals—as old John had the name of being an ideal miser, who hid bags of money up the chimney and kept boxes of gold coins under the flooring of the unused rooms—always, however, without any satisfactory result. And old John sitting like a withered mummy in the sunshine, on a certain old bench which he much affected, grinned and chuckled when people asked him why he didn't keep a watch-dog or take another family into the house to protect him.

"Good gracious!" said the old miser. "What do I want of a dog to eat me out of house and home? And as for a family—well I fancy there're fools enough in the house a'ready since Mary Jane fell in love with Bill Jones, the cooper's son. Let the ghosts go ghosterin' round. They don't hurt me. And as for burglars, dear heart, if they knew how little there was to steal, they'd be a-spendin' their time to better advantage somewhere else."

Bill Jones, a strapping young giant, with a yellow, curly head and simple blue eyes, was regarded as a brave man when he went to ask old John Menard for his granddaughter's hand in marriage. The old miser regarded him with scornful eyes, and worked his toothless jaws about after a most appalling fashion.

"Eh?" said John. "My Mary Jane? What is it you're sayin' about 'er?"

"I love her, sir," repeated Bill, "and she loves me."

"Pshaw!" cried Mr. Menard.

"And I want to marry her," protested Bill Jones, sticking gallantly to his post.

"Well, you can't!" snarled Menard; "and there's an end of the matter."

"I can support her," said Bill Jones. "The cooperin' business is lookin' up and——"

"That don't make no difference," said the old man. "My gal don't marry anyone but a blacksmith. The old shop has got to be opened again, the business has got to go on."

Bill Jones stared. Then it was true, as the neighbours said, that John Menard was wont at times to light the forge fires at midnight and work away on rusty old nails and bars of long-used iron, especially on stormy nights, when sleep fled from his pillow.

"Don't you think, sir," he ventured, "that the cooperin'——"

"I don't know nothin' about the cooperin' and I don't care nothin' about it," said John steadfastly. "But this I do know: the man who marries my girl has got to be a blacksmith."

"Then," said Bill Jones, clenching his Herculean fists, "I'll be a blacksmith!"

He meant it. He apprenticed himself the next day to a sturdy son of Vulcan, whose forge roared in red volleys of flame up the chimney of a neighbouring shed, and never rested until he had qualified himself to shoe any horse in the county.

"I wouldn't do that for any girl," said Harvey Martin, Farmer Martin's nephew.

"Ah," said Bill Jones; "but you don't know how I love that girl! I have loved her ever since I met her comin' down Rabbit Hill that snowy afternoon with a horse-shoe in her hand. 'Grandfather says it's bad luck to pass a horse-shoe,' says she, laughin', when I made bold to ask her what on earth she was a-goin' to do with it; 'so I always bring 'em home. Grandfather has got a pile of 'em in the old shed behind the forge.' She had such a pretty way with her, don't you see; and her cheeks were that pink, and her eyes that black, as you couldn't think of nothin' but a doll. A blacksmith indeed! If the old man had bid me be a rope-dancer, I'd ha'e gone to work, practisin' with a will!"

Old John smiled grimly when he saw Bill Jones handle the red hot iron in the old forge, and viewed a set of horse shoes that his mighty hand had hammered out.

"It ain't bad work," said he. "You'll be a blacksmith, boy, if you keep on. Yes, you may marry Mary Jane if you like—*now!*"

Mr. and Mrs. William Jones's wedding trip was only to the nearest town to buy a carpet for the best room,

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and a set of blue edged crockery to start housekeeping with.

"It's sheer extravagance!" growled old John. "Clean scoured boards is good enough for anyone, and there was enough old cups and plates about the place, though a trifle cracked and chipped. But it ain't my money they're going to spend, and I'spose Bill Jones has a right to do as he pleases with his own."

But when the young couple returned, on a sunshiny October afternoon, old John sat out on his bench, his head bowed over the staff, which he clenched in both hands—dead!

There was no sign of violence, no trace of mortal agony on face or form. Had he fallen asleep he could not have looked more peaceful and calm, and Bill and Mary Jane both agreed that it was better so.

"He was peculiar, I know," said Mary Jane, bursting into tears; "but he was always good to me. Oh, poor grandfather!"

Then it was that the mob of sightseers, newspaper artists, curiosity hunters, inquisitive neighbours, and the innumerable army of people who have nothing else to do, beseiged the old place, going into ecstasies over broken spinning-wheels, three-cornered cupboards, brass fire-dogs, and canopy-topped bedsteads. And Mr. Griscombe, the lawyer, arrived and unlocked the old desk, which was propped up with a brick on one side, and had had all the panes of the glass front broken out at different times by enterprising burglars.

"No papers," said he; "no will on file here. I didn't suppose there would be. Mr. Menard deposited his last will and testament with me, ten years ago. It's very simple. It leaves everything—including, by name, the stock and fixtures of the blacksmith's shop and the collection of horseshoes which from time to time the deceased had accumulated for luck's sake—to his granddaughter, Mary Jane Menard. Now," he explained, "Mrs. William Jones, I'll read it to you."

"But," cried the neighbours, "where is the fortune? What has become of the old miser's money?"

"There is no mention made of money," said Mr. Griscombe dryly, "nor of fortunes."

The neighbours were greatly disappointed. Not so Bill Jones and his blooming wife.

"Polly is a fortune in herself," said Bill complacently.

"And I am sure no amount of money could make me happier than I am now," said cheerful Mary Jane.

And so Bill flung open the doors of the musty old blacksmith shop, lighted a huge fire, and put on his leather apron and sleeves, while Mary Jane took her needlework and sat out on the bench, where grandfather Menard had died, and sang softly to herself like a little human thrush.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Bill Jones, "what I'm going to do with all this heap of old horseshoes."

"It was for luck, you know," apologised Mary Jane.

"Grandfather never could pass a horseshoe without picking it up and bringing it home, and somehow he got me in the same habit. Some of these are very good, I think."

"And some of 'em ain't!" observed Bill, shrugging his broad shoulders. "However, I'll just give 'em all an overhauling and see what they do amount to. It's my opinion they'll most of 'em fetch just a halfpenny a pound for old iron."

"Well," said Mary Jane, with a sigh, "I suppose it's of no use keeping them."

"Hallo!" shouted Bill. "These down at the bottom are of a mortal queer colour! Eh? Iron? Not these ain't—not if I'm a judge of metal! Polly, these are *gold!*"

"What!" cried Polly.

"Solid gold!" said Bill Jones. "Tarnished and discoloured, and nigh the colour of the old horseshoes themselves, but solid gold! Polly, Polly, my girl, we've found the old man's fortune at last! No wonder the burglars never robbed him of it, for, as true as you live, he's beaten it into horseshoes!"

"It can't be possible!" cried Polly, who, dropping the blue gingham apron that she was making, had hurried to the spot.

"But it is!" said Bill Jones triumphantly. "Don't you know gold when you see it, Polly? Just look *here!*"

It was true. John Menard, full of whim and caprice, had taken his own measure for preserving his own property; and all the clue which he had chosen to furnish as to the whereabouts of his not inconsiderable savings was the decree that his granddaughter should marry no one but a blacksmith.

And now the rush of sightseers, correspondents, and curious neighbours became greater than ever. And they have been ransacking the old place, ever since Mr. and Mrs. Bill Jones removed into more modern and commodious quarters, for hidden treasures, but in vain.

And Bill has nailed one of the best of horseshoes—an iron one, not a gold one—over the front door of his new house.

"For luck's sake!" he said.

And Mary Jane whispered also:

"For luck's sake!"

PAN.

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MOUNTAINEERING IN ENGLAND. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Austin Fryers. The striking photographs which illustrate this article show that it is quite unnecessary to go to Switzerland to break one's neck in mountaineering. The climbing that can be obtained at home is as perilous and as excellent a test for the nerves as the most courageous and hardy mountaineer could desire.

THE WEALTH OF THE WORLD. Written and illustrated by J. Holt Schooling. Here we have presented to us in picturesque form some most interesting facts about the distribution of the wealth of the world.

CHANGING SILVER INTO GOLD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Herbert C. Fyfe. This article gives full information about the remarkable discovery which has recently been made by Dr. Emmens.

THE DEVIL'S PICTURE-BOOKS. (Illustrated with Examples.) By J. H. Kemmis. Under this title are reproduced a most interesting series of the playing-cards used in different parts of the world.

HOW THE HANDS ARE HELD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By E. Le Breton-Martin. The author of this article has obtained a very striking series of photographs of the most curious attitudes for carrying the hands, which have come under his observation.

THE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF MR. GLADSTONE. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By W. Arthur Woodward. This is the most complete account that has ever been published of Mr. Gladstone's recreations throughout his long and varied career.

ANIMAL ACROBATS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By J. Malcolm Fraser. In this article a description is given of some of the very clever tricks which dogs and cats have been trained to perform, and illustrations are given of some of the most difficult feats.

AND HALF-A-DOZEN COMPLETE STORIES.

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SHOULD STOUT PERSONS STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever which was perhaps indirectly responsible for the untimely end in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeeds only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome. The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite be appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says: "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2lb. to 12lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning; but, on the contrary, he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination, which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get this book, the price of which is only threepence. It is entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C. It can be had direct.—*Ilfracombe Observer.*

EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS IN THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY.

"Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength, and muscle by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an absolute success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, absolutely guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring judge. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information, we may say that, on sending three penny stamps, a book entitled 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), containing a reprint of Press notices from some hundreds of Medical and other journals (British and Foreign), and other interesting particulars, including the 'recipe,' can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C."—Extract from *The Belfast News Letter.*

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

W. M. wishes to know whether wooden shoes are worn by any considerable number of people in Europe.——It is estimated that there are no fewer than 70,000,000 Europeans who wear wooden shoes. Bass wood is ordinarily employed for *sabots*, but willow is the best material. Poplar, beech, walnut, and birch are also used.

Lucy is an advanced young lady. She thinks she can make a mark in journalism, and proposes to go to Japan; as that country is advancing by leaps and bounds, an enterprising journalist ought to start an up-to-date paper and make money quickly.——I am afraid there is no chance for you in Japan, Lucy. Some time ago a law was promulgated prohibiting women from becoming publishers or editors, as "the discharge of such work by females is neither becoming or desirable." Better stay at home.

L. G.—Neither Darwin nor any other responsible naturalist ever said that "men were descended from monkeys." He merely pointed out that it was probable that man and monkey might be descended from the same ancestral stock, which is quite a different thing to saying that one is descended from the other.

C. G. complains that the old saying about not being able to get a quart into a pint pot is inaccurate. "It implies that you cannot get more than a pint into a pint pot. Why not, seeing that water is compressible?"——Water is compressible theoretically, but practically it is not. If you subject water to an additional pressure of one atmosphere, it is compressed about one twenty-thousandth part of its bulk. Let the old saying alone, C. G., it is sufficiently accurate for ordinary mortals.

Henry writes thus: "My namesake, King Henry I., is said to have had an arm measuring thirty-six inches, hence the length of the present yard. I am curious to know whether this is also the origin of the 'yard-arm'!"——Henry, editing this paper is a serious business. You should try the *Big Budget*.

S. S. wants to know who St. Valentine was.——He was a Christian martyr, put into chains by Claudius XI. for having assisted the martyrs during that Emperor's persecution of the Christians. The custom of sending love tokens on February 14th is of Pagan origin, and it is supposed that in early times the Christian pastors attempted to give to the ceremony a religious character by using the names of certain saints, and by fixing the feast on St. Valentine's Day.

J. J.—The Income tax was at its highest during the Crimean War. From 1854 to 1855, on incomes of £100 and upwards, it amounted to 1s. 2d. in the £, but in the course of the next few years it dropped to 5d. It fell to its lowest point in 1874 to 1876 when it was only 2d. Since then it has been steadily on the increase.

A. L.—Japan is a corruption of the Chinese word Shipen-Kue, which means "Root of Day," or "Sunrise Kingdom," because Japan is directly east of China.

M. A. writes: "Is it true that you can frighten a lobster to pieces? I was told so, but although I have tried it on several lobsters, the trick won't work."——It is only partly true, M. A. The lobster, like its brothers, the crawfish and the crab, is peculiarly sensitive to loud noises, and it is a fact that a loud clap of thunder will cause him to drop his large claws in order that he may scurry over the ground, and get out of danger the more quickly. The loss of his claws inconveniences him for a short time only; he is blessed with the faculty of growing others.

D. K. when in his teens, had one great ambition; he wanted to be a "six-footer," as he terms it. But Nature was against him, and he has had to be contented with five feet eight inches. He now tries to console himself with the reflection that had he been over six feet, he would have been conspicuous.——To some extent yes. Only one person in two hundred is over six feet in height.

H. M.—When writing to a Frenchman, always put the Monsieur in full; it is bad taste to contract it to M.

D. S. L.—Skating had its origin in Holland hundreds of years ago. This sport had its bone age before its iron or steel one. In the thirteenth century, young men used to fasten the leg-bones of animals under their feet by means of thongs, and slide along the ice, pushing themselves by means of an iron-shod pole.

H. S. wants to know what proportion of the tea consumed in this country comes from China.——Barely one-tenth is supplied by the Celestial Empire, and it is probable that even this comparatively small portion will dwindle almost to nothing by the end of the present century.

Country Cousin has come up to town to see the "sights," and being a very demure young lady, she is anxious to know whether it would be considered "proper" for her to ride about in a hansom alone.——Several years ago such an action would have been thought extremely unladylike, but that idea has long since been exploded, and if you care to see London in a hansom, you may certainly do so without being guilty of any impropriety.

B. D. H.—Railway trains are a great deal heavier than you think. One of average size with the engine would weigh two hundred and forty tons. The engine alone often weighs as much as eighty tons.

G.—Perhaps the most singular thing that ever got into Chancery was a cheese. It was made by a number of Somersetshire farmers, and intended for the christening of the Princess Royal. Being of huge proportions it was made for some time before the event was to come off, but, unfortunately, in the meantime the joint owners fell out, and one party applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the other party from exhibiting the cheese. The injuction was granted, and the cheese came under the control of the Court until the owners were reconciled.

Stanley writes to say that judging from the old oil paintings of people a hundred years or more ago, to be seen in the National Gallery and elsewhere, he considers that, as a nation, we must be growing decidedly handsomer, for the majority of the afore-mentioned pictures he considers are "awful frights."——You have probably not made any allowance for the effects of dress, and for the very different style of wearing the hair that were in vogue in the old days. Then again, each age differs in its opinion as to what is beautiful, as indeed almost every nation does, and could the originals of the old pictures to which you refer once more visit the earth, they would probably think what "awful frights" the present inhabitants are.

G. P.—It is estimated that at present the English language is spoken by about 115,000,000 people.

G. H.—Probably the queerest form of language is that employed by the natives of the Cameroons, by means of which they are enabled to send messages quickly from one village to another. It is what may be called the "drum" language. A peculiarly shaped drum is used, the surface of the head being divided into unequal parts. In this way the instrument is made to yield two distinctive notes. By varying the intervals between the notes, a complete code of signals for every syllable in the language is produced.

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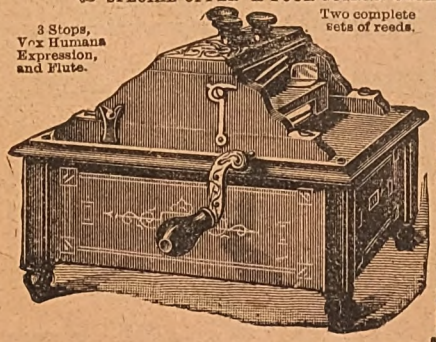

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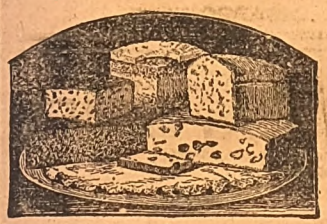

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 481. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 19TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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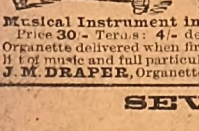

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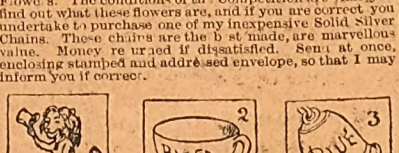

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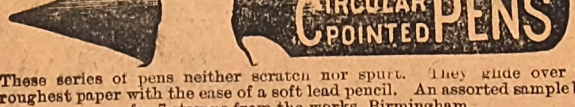

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 481.] For the Week ending March 19th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

THE UNCANNY HAND.

"WHAT a restless creature you are," said my friend Stephen Vronsky, one evening, as we sat together in an apartment which I had just then taken, and which overlooked the Champs Elysées.

"Ah!" I answered, as I puffed a blue cloud into the air.

"Yes, I should think you were what you Theosophists call an astral body. I received one letter from you postmarked Calcutta. A week later I heard of you in Ceylon. Then you were on a camel's back headed for Damascus, and—now, well, I don't know whether you are really here or not, for you seem so nearly ubiquitous that you make me dizzy."

"But you are glad to see me all the same, eh?"

"That, of course, my boy. But how do you manage it?"

"I don't manage it, Stephen; I strictly follow the impulse of Theosophy. I am migratory; not so ubiquitous as our Mahatmas can be. But I find my happiness in being on the move. I'm not a rooted tree, but a creeping vine."

"I should say a flash of lightning! Still, here you are, and I propose to enjoy you to the top of my bent. By-the-way, splendid rug, that!"

"Yes, I got that of an old dealer in Bagdad. You never saw one like it, I imagine?"

"And that tapestry?"

"Oh, I'm glad you appreciate that. Bought it at an auction three years ago, here in Paris. Louis XIV."

Stephen had a fine eye—a perfect hawk's-eye—for bits of rare pottery, old vases, antique bronzes, and the like. So we spent half-an-hour in looking over my collection; and then we talked about Theosophy.

"Well, that's the queerest thing yet," he said, as he stood at my table, some time afterwards, looking at half-a-dozen bits of *bric-à-brac*.

"The inkstand?" I said. "Yes, that is quite worth a critical survey. I bought it in——"

"No, no!" he interrupted impetuously. "Not the inkstand; but that——"

"Ah, yes," I answered. "It was one of my prizes, perhaps my chief prize; but the story connected with it is one I seldom tell."

"I never saw its like," he went on.

"Probably not, my dear boy, and its like you never will see again."

"It looks like a skeleton hand."

"That's precisely what it is."

"Truly?"

"Certainly. Those are the bones of a human hand."

"Where did you buy it?"

"I didn't buy it; it was given to me—by the owner."

"The what?" he said, in a genuine surprise.

"The owner," I said. "A dead man gave it to me in payment for services rendered."

"A dead man! A Mahatma?"

"No, I think not," I answered. "But I am telling you the plain, unvarnished truth. If you want the story you shall have it; but I assure you beforehand, you will not believe a word I say. Nobody would or ever could believe it, so I have kept the matter to myself for fear of being dubbed a fool."

He took it up and examined it carefully.

"That's real bone, I should say," he soliloquised. "It's a coarse, hard, big hand; and the man who owned it was a——"

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"A thief," I broke in.

"You are very observing, Stephen; and your description of the man does you credit. When he gave it to me the several bones dropped apart, of course; but I had them carefully mounted, as you see, and it is one of my most sacred souvenirs."

He insisted on my telling him the details of the incident, which I did, not wholly without reluctance, because it deals with what is commonly regarded as the impossible. I couldn't blame him for discrediting my statements, neither can I blame you if you follow his example and shrug your shoulders.

"In October, '89, I roamed through parts of southern Europe bordering on the Adriatic, and never visited by tourists. I was on foot most of the time, for it gave me leisure to see the country and to study. I passed through Herzegovina and Montenegro, and got well down to the borders of Albani, which is close to Greece, and, being very tired, planted myself in a wretched inn in Parga. The hills at the back of the village are infested by brigands who are very gentlemanly and very savage. They treat you with the utmost respect until they've got your last penny, and then send you to glory with a bullet in your brain. I had been warned, however, and managed to avoid the friendly attentions of these rogues.

"If you want to find the climate of Paradise, go to Albania in October. Right before you lie the placid, deep-blue waters of the Mediterranean. Above you is a sky with such a depth of colour as your eyes never beheld. It seems to bend over you in confidential friendliness. And as for the fields and mountain sides—— But, bless me, what's the use in trying to paint the picture? It can't be done. And the nights—the October nights! I never saw such stars—cohorts, legions of them vieing with one another in brilliancy. Not a cloud to be seen; only that vast expanse of blinking gems.

"Well, just outside the village limits is a graveyard. It's not much, but it's antique and quaint. I used to wander through its paths, and wonder how men could die with such a beautiful place to live in.

"They told me that a famous brigand had been buried in one corner of this little God's-acre, and I had a morbid curiosity to find his grave. It was not difficult; and one evening I sat on the sod that covered him, and indulged in the moody thoughts to which the occasion gave rise. Perhaps I had been there half-an-hour—the latter part of the time with closed eyes.

"Suddenly I heard a strange rattling of bones at my side. Opening my eyes, and turning my head, I saw, sitting close to my side, a skeleton.

"'Good-evening, signor,' said the bony jaw.

"You know I pride myself on my Italian, so I returned his salutation; but, I admit, with a strong, creeping feeling, which was about as close to fear as I care to come.

"'I live down there,' he said, pointing to the grave.

"'So I judge from your looks,' I replied.

"'I have been dead,' he went on—'let me see—it's forty years now.'

"'Fully as much as that,' I remarked, as I called his attention to the fact that there was no flesh on his bones.

"'I am, indeed, terribly wasted,' he said with a sigh; 'but they are all so. The waters are close, and there's no fresh air. I was once as plump and round as you are. And now see!' He shook his arm, and its joints made a very unpleasant, grating sound, like the opening of a door with rusty hinges.

"Then I half rose, thinking I had had quite enough for one evening; but he placed his left hand on my arm, and said:

"'Sit still, signor. I have something to say—a secret to divulge. You can help me. Will you?'

"I professed myself entirely at his service.

"'You know who I am?' he asked.

"'I have not that honour.'

"'Did you never hear of Antonio Berotti?'

"'What! The famous old rascal—the terror of all the country round—the bandit?' I exclaimed.

"'The same,' he replied; and something like a smile wreathed his fleshless mouth.

"He was evidently gratified at my knowledge of his career.

"'Well, what of him?' I asked.

"'I am Antonio;' and as he uttered the words he fairly chuckled. 'Yes, I am Antonio, and there has been no brigand since to compare with me. The fellows nowadays are all apprentices. They never learnt the profession; they bungle. But, bless you, signor, you should have seen me in my palmy days. Why, the girls were all in love with me. I could have taken my pick of the lot. And as for the men—well they grew pale when they heard I was coming down from the mountains. See that high cliff yonder? How it stands out against the sky! That was my home. I had many a happy year up there, and many are the pretty lips I have kissed—the prettiest in all the country. Lack a day, but I'm dead now, and I don't believe they would like me in this guise. It's a great burden to be dead, signor. Allow me to say I don't like it.'

"I intimated that I had no personal knowledge on the subject; but had no doubt, judging from appearances, that he was a good authority.

"'Now to the point,' he said, with some degree of impatience. 'I order you to go to——'

"'Order me?' I asked, rather irritated at the imperious manner he assumed.

"'I beg your pardon, signor,' he instantly responded. 'If I were in the mountains, as in the old days, I should use those very words, and if you failed to obey, your head would pay the forfeit. But now'—and there was a sigh in the air—'now I am only a dead lion. I plead with you, therefore, and most humbly beg you to——'

"'Go on,' I said. 'I will do what I can to serve you. But I am an Englishman, and not accustomed to being ordered by anyone.'

"'And you have no bandits in your country?' he asked, with a surprised tone.

"'Well, no professional bandits,' I answered. 'We have, however, a large number of company promoters who exercise your functions.'

"'Ah, what an unhappy country for an enterprising man to live in. I don't wonder that you have come to dear Albania.'

"'Are you an enthusiast in your profession?' I remarked.

"'I am, indeed,' he replied. 'But to return to my request. I am anxious just now that you should find the widow Borosi. I have an important communication for her.'

"'Ah, I see! There's a woman; it's always a woman. Can't you get along without these dallyings, Antonio, now that you are in your grave?'

"'You mistake—you mistake, signor. The moment you see her you will understand that there is no love in the case. Why, she is cross-eyed, and has the temper of a walrus. You do not compliment my taste.'

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"I saw that he was really offended, and I hastened to apologise.

"'This is my story,' said the brigand, who was easily mollified. 'Just before I was——'

"'Killed?' I suggested.

"'Quite right. It's an ugly fact, and I don't like to recall it, but as we are talking confidentially, I may as well say "killed." Well, just before that event occurred, I made a raid with my band on the villagers. It became necessary, in the course of the scrimmage, to put a stiletto into Pietro, the woman's husband. That is to say he had a large sum of money in the house, and very unreasonably refused to give it up. I tried all proper arguments, but somehow he wasn't convinced. Some people—a brigand, perhaps, notices that more than the layman, because his opportunities for observing human nature are greater—some people part with their cash very reluctantly. I didn't want to do Pietro any injury; but, to tell the truth, it couldn't be helped. I had only half-an-hour to spare for the job, and was naturally in a hurry to get through with it, and out of the way of the officers, who were not friendly to me. So I made a pass at the old man, and he went down. The woman behaved in the most frightfully unbecoming manner. She wailed, and moaned, and screamed. I rebuked her tenderly, but she was deaf to my words.

"'Well, her son—unfortunately he was her only son—broke in on us, and was inclined to be violent. I rather liked the boy, but he was altogether imprudent in getting mixed up in the affair. If he had simply attended to his father all might have been well. But he rashly produced his blade, and that angered me. He even succeeded in making a flesh-wound on my left arm. I'll show it to you, signor, for he was a brave boy. See! Ah, I beg your pardon; it's no longer on my left arm. I forgot. However, the upshot of the business was that I was forced to kill the son, too. I was sorry; but business is business, and must be attended to.

"'I took the money, and I got away; but, for some unaccountable reason, that woman's voice haunted me. I heard it at the most inopportune times. I would come home tired and worn out by a little excursion, and I couldn't sleep. A sort of chronic insomnia attacked me, and I became very uncomfortable. I used to reason with myself. What are a couple of men, more or less, I argued, in a great world like this? They were honest fellows, and doubtless went to Heaven. They had, therefore, nothing to complain of. But it did no good; my sleep was gone. I couldn't understand it; but there was the fact.

"'The woman was impoverished! I took everything she had. What of it? The world is full of poor people, and every merchant takes all he can get, doesn't he? Isn't that the policy of all commercial transactions? I was neither better nor worse than other men who are profoundly respected, and yet—will you believe it?—I couldn't get my usual sleep.

"'A month after this affair I got badly caught. My nervous system was overtaxed. I had done too much work, and here I am. The Borosi money I never used. I had an aversion to it; so I hid it in a secure place. I want you to find it, for this insomnia pursues me even into the grave. Everyone else in the churchyard enjoys his slumbers; but I wake up with a start, and am terribly lonely.

"'Now I'll tell you where the bag of gold is concealed, and I pray you to find it and deliver it to the old woman; after that I hope to have a good rest. Signor, on your honour, will you do me this favour?'

"I gave the required promise.

"On my return to the hostelry I found the proprietor ready to retire, and, therefore, anxiously awaiting me. He yawned, complained of the lateness of the hour, and suggested that all honest people had been in bed a full couple of hours.

"He went before me to my room, and deposited the candle on a quaint old washstand. As he was taking his leave, I said casually:

"'Did you ever hear of Antonio Berotti?'

"He dropped into a chair and stared at me.

"'The—the——' he began.

"'Yes, precisely; the brigand.'

"'I have heard of him—that, is, I have heard the villagers speak of him,' he answered.

"'Killed, wasn't he?'

"'Yes, yes, killed by a stray bullet from a gendarme.'

"'Where was he buried?'

"'In the north-east corner of the churchyard yonder.'

"'Did you ever see him?' I ventured to ask.

"He hesitated and his eyes grew large.

"'I see,' I said; 'I see, old man. You were one of the band in your younger days, eh?'

"'For the Holy Virgin's sake——'

"'Oh, of course! I keep secrets very well. I only wanted to satisfy my curiosity. Good-night, and pleasant dreams.'

"The next day I went to find the bag of gold.

"I never had so much difficulty in following a clue in my life. You see, forty years make a difference even in Albania.

"Two miles east of the village, I ran at last into a forest road.

"Then I saw that I was getting on famously. Right ahead of me was the mountain spur, which was my most important landmark. I was to get to a position which would bring a deep gulch in line with the bald head of this spur. It took two hours of hard climbing, but I did it. So far, so good.

"Ten rods to the right of that spot I was to find a boulder. All right; there it was, and I began to feel rather jubilant. From the boulder I was to travel just a point west of north for sixty paces, and I should come across an old gnarled beech. That was the terminus of my journey. I could be sure that the beech was the right tree, because, if I put my back against it, compass in hand, I could see the southern ledge of the mountain-spur projecting over the chasm, as though some giant had crawled on hands and knees to the edge, and was looking over.

"But there was no gnarled beech in sight, only a huge stump. However, I followed the directions, looked at my compass, and then raised my head. There, right ahead of me, was the ledge, sure enough. Where was the tree, though? I rambled about in search of it, but could find nothing. By that time I was pretty nearly tired, and heartily wished that the skeleton of Antonio had chosen someone else to do his will. I sat down by the side of the stump, lit a cigar, and began to think. Forty years ago! Well, even trees grow old in that time, and perhaps this one had been cut down and used for firewood long ago.

"I noticed that the stump was hollow. As a mere act of curiosity, I thrust my hand in up to my arm-pit, and began to fumble about. I touched something—a stone, probably, I thought; but what in the world was it doing there, and how did it get there? I drew it out. It was a gold piece. I had struck the treasure by

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accident. I thrust my hand in a second time, and drew out the tattered, decayed remnants of a leather pouch. The next time I got hold of a handful of gold—ten pieces. I was evidently in luck. Well, there were sixty-five of them in all, and they represented the savings of I don't know how many years on the part of poor Borosi and his wife. I concealed them carefully, and went home with the feeling that the old skeleton had good cause to congratulate me.

"The next morning I roamed through the bazaar and bought a big leather purse, evidently the counterpart of the one that had rotted, and then started to find my widow. That was not very difficult, for I found that her name was still Borosi. She had never married in all these years. That struck me as strange, for when I entered her poor little cottage, she was a comely old creature of seventy-eight, and at thirty-eight she must have been worthy the attention of some enterprising man. But women have all sorts of oddities, and I was too much interested in other matters to ask impertinent questions.

"'My good woman,' I said by way of introduction, 'are you married?'

"She shook her head.

"'How long since your husband Pietro died?'

"'Oh, so long, I can hardly remember.' She rocked to and fro in her chair.

"'And your son?' I queried.

"'He died the same day,' she answered. 'But why do you ask, signor?'

"'Because I am an acquaintance of Antonio Berotti,' I said.

"The effect of my words was electrical. The past came out of its obscurity, and was a vivid, living present. She shuddered—buried her face in her hands.

"'My all!' she cried. 'My dear ones the good God permitted them to die. I was left alone. All we had was taken.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'I know the whole story. Antonio told it to me.'

"'But he is in the churchyard,' she muttered. 'He, too, is dead. God forgive him his crime and the misery he caused.'

"'He never spent the money,' I suggested.

"'I do not know. I only know he took it.'

"'And he asked me to bring it to you.'

"With that I laid the pouch on the table and rose to go.

"'What does it mean?' she asked, thoroughly startled and frightened.

"'I don't know what it means, any more than you do,' I replied. 'There is the money, however. The very same gold pieces which Antonio took. Please to count them and see that the amount is correct.'

"She took them one by one, and strange reminiscences chased each other through her mind. It was a pathetic scene. She trembled in every limb, and her eyes were filled with tears.

"'They are all there,' she said sadly. 'All there, just the same as forty years ago. Oh, what a day that was! I have been an old woman ever since. My husband and my son! Alas!'

"But I couldn't stand it, so I hastily left the house, and I half believe she thought I was a ghost. I came so suddenly, had so strange an appearance—possibly she had never seen a foreigner before—and disappeared quickly. At any rate, she had the money, and my mission was pretty nearly at an end.

"At ten o'clock the following night—it was as dark as a pocket, by the way, and I ran into half-a-dozen head-stones—I was seated once more on Antonio's grave.

"He was a long time coming, but just as I was giving it all up for that night I heard the old rattling of bones, and there he was close by my side. He was evidently in a good mood, for he chuckled as well as he could under the circumstances.

"'Well, signor?' he asked.

"'It's all right,' I said.

"'You found the tree?'

"'Yes—or rather the stump—for the tree fell long ago.'

"'Ah, yes; I forgot that,' he muttered. 'It was very careless of me. But, you see, I don't mingle with the world much, and can't get round in the daytime to see how things are going.'

"'There were sixty-five pieces,' I said.

"'That's the number. And you gave them to old Borosi?'

"'I did.'

"'Good. A thousand thanks, signor. You have done me a great service. My insomnia is already relieved. I feel positively drowsy. My bed isn't exactly comfortable, but it'll do. I heartily wish I could give you some souvenir of my gratitude, but my quarters down below are scantily furnished, but I am very grateful. Good-bye, signor; good-bye. I will go down and take a nap. I need it, I can assure you.'

"With that he began to sink into the sod. When he was nearly out of sight I heard him say feebly:

"'A thousand thanks, good signor!' and he stretched out his hand.

"I took it; to my horror and dismay it came off at the wrist.

"I cried out quickly:

"'My dear fellow, you've lost your hand!'

"He replied sleepily:

"'It's of no sort of consequence. Keep it, if you will, and perhaps it will convince you that Antonio the Brigand did one good deed.'

"That is the hand, Stephen, and that is how I came by it."

E. W. Waters.

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New Serial Story.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

AMAURY MONTRUEL, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving in Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson is Montruel's secretary.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING OF THE BASOCHE.

As the sun was rising next morning over the still sleeping city, two men crossed one of the wooden bridges which then connected the two parts of Paris divided by the river Seine. They were returning from a night's carouse, and looked considerably stupefied after their hard drinking. One wore a long, close-fitting great coat and student's cap, beneath which were the cadaverous features of Montruel's secretary Maître Samson.

His companion was dressed as a knight, with a scholar's rusty gown thrown over his shoulders. His clothes were discoloured by smoke and stained with wine, but he carried himself with the air of a gentleman, and through all his shabbiness there were evident signs of better days. He was a tall, spare man of six-and-twenty, prematurely aged by dissipation, and his features wore a reckless expression. His threadbare cap rested on dark, bushy curls, he wore a dagger at his belt and, according to the fashion of his time, his long pointed shoes were tied up to his knees, only in his case the customary gold or silver chains were replaced by bits of cord.

This was Tristan de Pamiers, King of the Basoche,* at once the terror of the "town," and the glory of the "gown" in those early days.

The fresh morning air seemed to revive them, and suddenly Tristan stopped short before one of the low, wooden houses near Nôtre-Dame, saying, as he extended his hand tragically:

"That's it."

"What?"

"That's the abode of the prettiest girl in Paris."

Samson shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. Wine was his only mistress.

"I saw her yesterday at her window, but she ran away when she saw me looking. Ah, that glimpse was like a sight of Venus herself, illuminating this dingy hole with her radiant beauty!"

"Are we going to talk business or not?" growled Samson.

Tristan took no heed of his words, but stood as if rooted to the spot, with his hands clasped on his heart, and his eyes raised to the closed window, half in ecstasy and half in jest, apostrophising his new divinity.

"You may stop here and play the fool by yourself, then. I'm going home," said his disgusted companion.

"Heart of stone!" sighed Tristan. Then, changing his tone, he continued: "Look here, you miserable wretch, what right have you to speak to me like that? It's your place to wait my pleasure and hold your tongue."

"I hold the *purse*," said Samson, rattling the coins in his pouch.

The student smiled. "So you do, friend," he replied, "and your purse is very useful, even though every decent feeling is dried up within you. Your crowns are good gold, and I excuse much in virtue of them. I will come another time to the shrine of my goddess. Now I am at your service."

They moved on, and the conversation took a serious turn. Samson began:

"Have you heard the news about Agnes the Fair? Montruel has given her the castle of Étampes and I saw her being carried there in a beautiful gilded litter last night."

"Why has he done that? I thought the king had only given it to him a short time ago?"

"She knew a secret, and that was the price of her silence."

"Is that the secret you know?" asked Tristan.

The wily Samson crept closer to him and whispered:

"I have a double secret, and I shall expect two castles as the price of my silence. I mean to be a lord before I am much older."

Tristan laughed heartily to the annoyance of his companion, but their attention was diverted by the sight of four men on the other side of the river carrying something that glittered in the sunlight.

"Heavens!" cried Tristan. "We were talking about a litter, and here comes a beauty."

Samson made no answer, but watched the approaching group with marked attention.

"Why don't you speak?"

"Your sight is better than mine, tell me if there is anyone in that litter," he said at last.

Tristan shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked intently.

*A name given to the law-students of Paris—in the middle ages—they were a somewhat turbulent and anything but law-abiding class.

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"No, it is empty."

Meanwhile the men had reached the bank and were being ferried across to where the two friends were standing.

"You had better ask the bearers."

"It is certainly *her* litter," said Samsom in a low tone, "but why has it come back empty?"

"You had better ask the bearers."

He hesitated, for he recognised them as belonging to Montruel's secret service, men chosen by himself for their unscrupulousness and silence. However, upon second thoughts he asked as they passed:

"You are returning from the castle of Étampes, are you not?"

"No, Maître Samson, we did not get so far," answered the leader, adding with a malignant smile:

"As we were going through the forest we were attacked by some scoundrels who took a fancy to the lady's jewels."

"And what happened? Where is she?" faltered Samson.

"Oh, she's out of harm's way. She'll wear no more finery in *this* world," said the man callously as he moved on with the empty litter.

"*Diable*! if your secrets are like hers, my friend, perhaps you may not be allowed to take possession of your castles, either!" said Tristan to Samson with an uneasy laugh.

"Oh, I'll see to that. But now to work again. My noble master, Amaury Montruel, wishes you to organise a rising in the city shortly."

"That's quite easy."

"Yes, I know, but he wants something a little out of the common—not a mere students' fray with a few broken heads—but an organised movement to strike a decided blow."

"Against the King?"

"No, for the King."

"Well, explain yourself more clearly."

"You know that the Pope has sent a special Legate over here to preside at a great Council of Ecclesiastics who are to meet in a day or two to discuss this question of the King's two wives. Last night Philip Augustus went to the palace of Jean de Nesle, unattended save for this page Albret, and surprised all the great barons of France in the act of signing an agreement with the Papal Envoy to disclaim all allegiance to the King if he should persist in retaining Agnes de Méranie as his wife. At first the Duke of Burgundy, who was at the head of the conspiracy, tried to defy Philip and carry matters with a high hand, but he was glad to come to terms in the most humble manner when he found that his master had Cadocu, who was there too, and his Free-Lances at his back, for he knew that none of his men would hold the field for an hour against the Free-Lances and the King's body-guard combined. The result was that the would-be rebels found themselves practically prisoners in the hands of the king they were plotting to betray, and the Legate had the pleasure of seeing them all sign a fresh bond of fealty to Philip instead of becoming the tools of his Holiness.

"Well, that is all very well as far as it goes: but this Council will have a great effect on the minds of the citizens, and so we want the students to assemble in a body and decry Ingeburge as the real cause of all the disturbances of the Interdict, and the constant plots against the Crown which are springing up both outside and inside the Kingdom."

"But it's a lie. She is quite innocent of it all."

"That doesn't matter. If a lie is shouted by hundreds of voices, it carries far more weight than the truth spoken by a few."

The King of the Basoche thought for a moment. Then said:

"Montruel thinks he knows the students, and I know he doesn't. He wants them to tell the people a lie which will defame an innocent woman. Now these wild youngsters may have many vices——"

"Every vice," interrupted Samson.

"Well, every vice if you like; but they are younger than we are. They know Ingeburge was Queen first, that she is beautiful as well as unhappy, that the woman who ousted her is proud and insolent, and all their sympathies would go out to Queen Ingeburge, for their hearts are not dead yet!"

"Their hearts, indeed!" sneered Samson.

Tristan folded his arms and looked critically at his companion.

"You are not thirty yet, and you look like an old hag. You scoff like a fiend at the word 'heart,' at the idea of enthusiasm or chivalry. Have you quite forgotten that you were ever young?"

"Quite."

"Well, so much the worse for you, but I have not, and however low I may have sunk, I remember the time when I should have answered such a proposal as this with my dagger and not with my tongue."

As he said this, a flush of honest indignation overspread his features and restored to them some of the nobleness that they had lost for ever.

"Yes, I daresay you would have done that *then*, but what answer do you give *now*?" Samson again jingled the coins in his well-filled pouch as he asked this question, and the action took effect.

"Now," said Tristan, hanging his head, "I am nearly as base as you, and my heart only wakes up at long intervals to remind me of my lost honour; so I leave my dagger in its sheath while I treat with a knave, and if his offer is good enough—well—I take it."

Samson drew out of his pouch twenty-five gold crowns, which he counted out carefully on the ground, saying as he did so:

"We are not children, and although I don't sympathise with your high-flown ideas, I dare say there may be some truth in what you say about the students. The fact is, we

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never trusted to them, but to you, yourself—you understand?"

"But how can I raise a riot by myself?"

"You might get others to help you; our good students don't go about labelled——"

An unpleasant light seemed to dawn on Tristan's mind, but he still kept silence.

"You don't seem very sharp this morning," said Samson testily, "but look here, now you've got the money there's no going back!"

"Then speak plainly."

"Certainly. I'm not squeamish. All men look pretty much alike in the same clothes. Dress a beggar, or a thief, in a student's gown, and who's to know that he's not one? Eh?"

"But it's infamous!"

"That doesn't matter. The question is: Can it be done?"

"I think——" began the other unwillingly.

"If you won't undertake it, give me back the money and I'll find someone else."

Tristan put his hand into the pocket of his ragged hose, not to take out the crowns, but to defend them in case of violence.

"If you can do it," pursued his tempter, "hold out your hand and I'll give you twenty-five more crowns, and later on you shall have what you want to prepare and bribe the vagabonds."

The King of the Basoche hesitated for a few seconds, then, stamping his foot on the ground and growling something like an oath under his breath, he held out his hand.

This conversation took place under the shadow of Nôtre-Dame, then in process of erection, and during this period a curious drama of old city life was being enacted around it. Along the right bank of the Seine, where the soil was soft and swampy and easily affected by the slightest rise in the river, stood groups of miserable wooden hovels in an advanced state of ruin, for no one took the trouble to repair them, seeing that they were only serving as temporary dwellings for the workmen employed at the cathedral. In many of the larger buildings lodgings were let upon a principle very similar to that of our modern "rookeries," in others privacy could be secured by extra payment, but comfort was unknown in all.

In addition to the legitimate workmen there congregated a whole colony of loafers and vagabonds, of loud-tongued vendors of various wares, who drove a thriving trade among the masons, so that "The Enclosure," as it was called, was the centre of life and interest, the happy hunting-ground of thieves and beggars, and the haunt of all the idlers of the city.

On the left bank of the river stood handsomer buildings, churches, convents, and fortress-like palaces raised their varied spires and clock-towers in picturesque confusion among the poplars which lined the Seine.

While Tristan de Pamiers had been standing before the hut which he said contained "the prettiest girl in Paris," a man enveloped in a long cloak, with a peaked cap well pulled down over his face, had been watching his movements closely, and as soon as the King of the Basoche and Maître Samson had passed out of sight, he emerged from the shadow of the protecting buttress behind which he had been standing, and, raising his cap, showed the handsome features of Albret, the king's page.

"Samson," he said to himself, "the tool of that villain Amaury Montruel, in close confab with the King of the Basoche! That means some devilry! I wonder what Tristan was looking at up there? I don't see anything very interesting."

The rickety wooden shutters of the houses were still all closed. No sign of human life was visible in this usually bustling place, no human form was to be seen on the many scaffoldings, and the great outline of Nôtre-Dame stood out against the morning sky, vast and silent above him. The day's work had not yet begun.

Albret stood in something like despair alone in this strange scene. At last he said, almost petulantly:

"Well, it's no use wasting my time in this way. I have to find that pretty boy we met the other night on the road and take him to my master before the day is many hours older. How I'm to do it is another matter. *Certes!* how pretty he was! And his skin! Many a court beauty would give all she possessed for one like it. I never heard a boy with a voice like his either; I can hear it still, but I wish I could hear the original instead of the echo."

While he was debating how he should set about his search he heard a rattling noise above him, and saw the shutters of a small window in the house opposite pushed open, and the face of a young girl appear in the dusky frame.

Albret stood stupefied. "I must be dreaming," he muttered. "It is, and yet it can't be! But I never saw such a marvellous resemblance. It must be his twin sister or else I made a mistake in the darkness. There can't be two faces like that!"

He drew back behind a stack of timber, and the girl, wholly unconscious of his presence, was looking at the strange scene around her with the rays of the rising sun playing among her golden curls, and her heavy downcast lashes shading her blue eyes from the strong light. She had evidently just got up, and was not yet fully dressed; but, emboldened by the apparent solitude, she leant out of the window with her elbow on the sill, drinking in the fresh morning air.

Albret's perplexity soon took the form of sweet certainty that, whoever she might be, this girl was one who appealed to him in a way that no woman had ever done before. He tried to laugh himself out of the conviction, but it was no use; and with the realisation of his own interest in the fair unknown, came the hideous thought that perhaps Tristan had also discovered her whereabouts! The King's commission was forgotten in the sweet contemplation of her

She was kneeling beside the old man.

whom he already called his love. In a few moments the vision vanished, the girl was called away by someone within, and Albret still stood disconsolately gazing at the empty window-frame.

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CHAPTER IV.

Little Adam Finds a Friend.

When Eric and his sister Eve left the kindly shelter afforded to them on the night of their arrival by the Freemasons, they were directed to go to the house of one, Maître Thomas, with whom lodged old Christian the Dane, and where they would be able to obtain a separate room for Eve. It was at the window of this tiny compartment, called by courtesy a bed-room, that Albret had seen her, and it was the knocking of her brother and Christian at the door that had cut short her reflections and the page's love-dream.

A few moments later she was kneeling beside the old man, while Eric recounted to him the events which had led up to and had happened on their journey. Their old countryman did not hold out much hope of their being able to do any good by their presence in the city.

"But surely our dear Princess Angel is not dead?" asked Eve in an earnest tone, using the quaint Danish form of the name they loved so well.

"God forbid!" replied the old man gravely. "But you will not be allowed to see her. Though I was one of her attendants who came with her from our Northern home, I have not been permitted to enter the abbey, where she is confined, for the last five months. The guards drive me away, though I have begged them on my knees to admit me. The only answer I get is the crossing of their halberds and the swinging of the massive gate in my face. Such are the King's orders."

"How cruel he must be!" said the girl bitterly.

"No, he is bewitched by that gipsy he has pretended to marry!"

His two young hearers turned a shade paler with horror, and the old man went on, as if to himself.

"No, the King is not cruel. I believe he would have loved Ingeburge, for the first time he saw her he was struck by her sweetness and beauty. But the very day before the wedding, that bold, scheming, evil-eyed Hungarian had a long interview with him, and from that hour the troubles of France began. Berthoud de Méran brought a gold medallion containing the portrait of his daughter, and the King wore it round his neck even when he went to the altar."

"When he married Princess Angel?"

"Yes, even then. And many a sign was sent to warn men of coming disaster, signs in the sky, in the air, and on the earth; but no one heeded them. All through the service I saw this Berthoud looking at our Princess with an evil expression, and the King was so ill at ease that his answers could hardly be heard by those standing nearest to him.

"After the ceremony Philip Augustus withdrew to the palace with Berthoud de Méran and Amaury Montruel, who has since been his chief favourite, while the newly wedded bride was taken straight from the church to the Abbey St. Martin, where she has been shut up ever since. Shortly afterwards Agnes de Méranie joined her father in the city, and the unholy alliance was entered into between her and the King. Now the Pope has laid the kingdom under an interdict, and sent a legate here to compel the King to obey the church on pain of losing the allegiance of his barons."

"I have no doubt it will be very hard for us to see the Queen, but you must not discourage us too much, Christian," said Eve. "We have found one friend already, you know."

"Who's that?"

"The knight Dieudonné, who brought us into the city."

"I never heard of a French knight of that name," said the old man incredulously.

Felt himself firmly seized by the collar.

"Well, there is one, and he must be a man of some importance," put in Eric, "for he told me to go to Bishop Maurice de Sully, and ask him to give me work on the cathedral. The moment I mentioned the knight's name, the bishop told me I should be taken on at once, and I was to go to the overseer this morning. It is nearly time to start."

As he finished speaking the great bell clanged out the stroke of half-past six, and the men swarmed like ants out of the surrounding huts, each bearing his hammer and trowel ready for the day's work. The booths were opened, fires were lighted to prepare the men's food, hawkers began to cry their wares in the harsh, strident voice peculiar to their class, men went about carrying wine in large cans, from which they doled it out to customers in leaden mugs, and announced their whereabouts by jingling a bell that might be heard even above the turmoil.

Among the crowd of whining beggars, two were especially worthy of remark. They rejoiced in the names of Ezekiel and Tréfoulloux, and were familiar figures in the inclosure. Begging, even in those early days was a trade that made great demands upon the ingenuity of its followers in order to gain a hearing from the public, and competition ran so high under the walls of Nôtre-Dame that an ordinary cripple had no chance of making the poorest living. Therefore Ezekiel, who was of an inventive turn of mind, had folded his legs back under his body something like those of a trussed fowl, then he had twisted his arms almost out of their sockets, and, with the aid of red ochre, had embellished his temples with a long gaping gash. He wailed thus to the passers-by:

"Look, good Christians, here is a man who has lost both legs while fighting against the infidels, who has had his arms twisted with heathenish instruments of torture, and his head cloven with a Syrian's scimitar! He was left for dead on the sandy desert, and lay there two whole weeks without a soul to care for him. Have compassion, and save your own souls by succouring a martyr for the Faith."

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Tréfouilloux, who in some respects excelled his brother in misfortune, had painted what looked like a big ulcer on his left breast, and so realistic was the work that the credulous observer fancied he could see the gangrene forming and eating away the wasted flesh. He bared his chest for the consideration of half a farthing, and invited the charitable to come and study his anatomy through this gruesome hole, assuring them that it was their last chance, as he could have but one more day to live before the poison of the boar's tusk completed its deadly work. And yet with all these attractions they barely earnt enough to buy paint, let alone food. All the profits were carried off by a huge woman, known as "Poor Louise," who was stretched out on a dirty heap of straw exhibiting four arms, one of which terminated in a goat's hoof.

Albret was still watching the deserted window when Christian, Eric, and Eve, wearing her boy's costume, came out of the house. He was in the act of going up to speak to them when Tristan de Pamiers, who had returned alone to the enclosure, thrust himself before Eve and asked rudely:

"How, now, my beauty, I should like to know what this masquerading means? Why do you hide the daintiest figure in the world under an ugly workman's blouse?"

Eric stepped forward, and, raising his hammer threateningly, said:

"He's only a child, master, you'd better wait till he's a man before you insult him."

The crowd closed in, expecting a row, and as Tristan laid his hand on his dagger to punish Eric's presumption, he felt himself firmly seized by the collar and dragged back a few paces.

"Who dares to lay hand on the King of the Basoche?" he said, trying to turn round. His wrath subsided a little when he recognised Albret, his former friend.

"Oh, I didn't expect to see you here, comrade! But never mind. I only know two good ways of welcoming an old friend. One is with the clinking of glasses and the other with the crossing of swords. So draw, my friend! I prefer your sword to the hammer of this churl."

The page did not attempt to draw his weapon, but stood contemptuously measuring his would-be antagonist.

"My glass shall never touch yours again, Tristan de Pamiers! As for my sword, that's another matter, but there's an old score to be paid first. How about the sums of money I've lent you in the old days?"

His cutting tone roused the other's pride for a moment, and, thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out a handful of gold crowns and held them out towards Albret; but the sight of the coveted gold made him regret his good impulse, and in another moment he had drawn back his hand, saying, with a forced laugh:

"The deuce take your old debts! Can't you trust me, Albret?"

"No, I cannot trust you," was the calm reply.

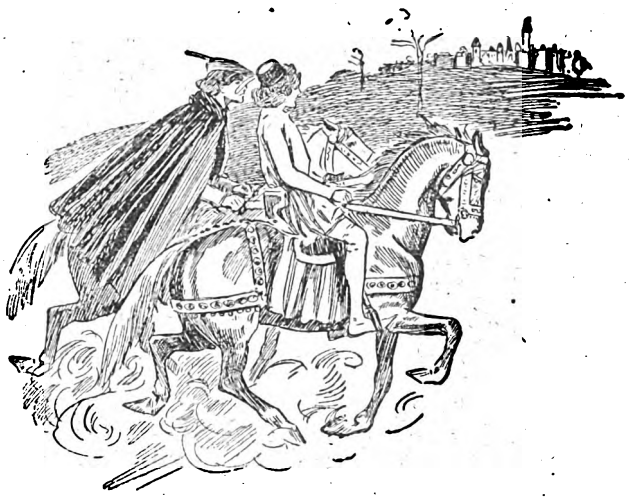
"All right, then," said the student insolently, as he repocketed the money. "You'll not have the honour of trying your strength with me this morning. I don't confer favours for nothing, and," he added with a frown, "this gold has been too hardly earnt to be parted with in a hurry."

With that he turned away amid the jeers of the crowd, and fought his way through the seething, unsavoury mass of human beings in no good mood either with himself or the world in general.

The three whose advent had unwittingly caused this quarrel had been standing by fearful of the result. Eric promptly expressed his deep gratitude for the page's timely intervention, and though Eve said little, her eyes were eloquent in their acknowledgment of her champion. In a few words Albret explained that he was commissioned to escort Little Adam to the presence of his master, the King. Old Christian looked dubiously at the young man, but dare not question him, and Eric was at no pains to conceal his anxiety for his sister's safety when he heard that he was not to be allowed to accompany her.

Only Eve herself seemed to have no fear, and her voice was quite steady when she said:

"I am ready to go with you, sir."



Albret and Eve were riding quickly.

After a hurried leave-taking they separated, Eve accompanying the royal page, who piloted her carefully through the gaping crowd to where he had horses in readiness for them, and the two men, with sad, anxious hearts to begin their day's work at the cathedral.

Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux resumed their piteous appeals when this little excitement had subsided, and their perseverance met with some reward, for, as a country bumpkin was stooping down to look at the painted wound, the dying possessor thereof managed to steal his purse in addition to the coin which had been duly paid for the wonderful sight.

Ezekiel, who had not been so lucky, now bent forward, and putting one of his twisted arms on his friend's shoulder, said:

"Come now, go shares, or I'll call the fool back!"

Tréfouilloux felt the injustice of the claim, but there was no appeal, so he complied with as good a grace as he could, and a couple of hours later these two sufferers were hopelessly intoxicated in a neighbouring wine-cellar.

Albret and Eve were meanwhile riding quickly in the direction of the Porte St. Honoré, and for some minutes neither spoke. He cast many a tender, furtive glance at his fair companion, but she seemed too busy with her thoughts to notice him.

"Sir," she said at last. "Are you not the page of the knight Dieudonné?"

"Yes, Maître Adam. I have that honour," he answered with a smile.

"And the knight Dieudonné is, I suppose, a servant of the King?"

"You are right again. The King has no more faithful follower."

After a moment's thought she began again:

"Sir Page, could you not manage to let me see the knight Dieudonné before I see the King?"

There was a note of plaintive entreaty in her voice that went straight to Albret's heart, but he could not promise an impossibility, so he said gently:

"You shall see them together, Little Adam."

When they had passed the gate, and were riding away

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from the city, he suddenly pulled up his horse and said, with his hand on her bridal:

"Do you recognise this place, Little Adam?"

They were in an avenue of young elm trees, and as she looked round her she saw the city behind them, and the dark towers of the Louvre standing out against the sky in front, while on either side the rich wooded fields stretched far and wide in the beauty of early spring, but it all seemed strange to her.

"No, sir; I don't think I have ever been here before."

"It was night, and you were half dead with weariness and pain; but surely you have not forgotten your ride into Paris so soon?"

"What? Was it here we met you and the knight?" she asked eagerly, with sparkling eyes.

Albret looked at her, his own eyes seeming to take fire from hers, and, with the proverbial indiscrimination of a lover, thought her as lovely in her poor apprentice's dress as if she had worn all the splendours of a court costume.

"Yes," he said, "it was here I helped you on to my horse and saw your sweet, fair face for the first time. It was here," and his dark eyes grew more eloquent, "that I guessed your secret."

Poor Eve was completely thrown off her guard by this sudden turn of the conversation, and now she almost reeled in her saddle.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Look into my eyes before you turn from me in fear," he pleaded. "I know you are no boy! You are a woman, and I love you—only look at me and tell me if you think you could love me in return."

The more he pleaded the more she lowered her eyes in timid perplexity, till at last he said:

"Perhaps you have left a lover in your distant home?"

"Oh no," she whispered, but so low that he could hardly catch the words.

"Then listen," he went on with a bright, winning smile. "I believe it is destiny, for they tell me that you are the foster-sister of Queen Ingeburge."

"The brother," she corrected.

"Will you not at least trust me that far?" he asked reproachfully, "for you cannot deceive me; and even if you reject my love, I would still be your friend and hers. The knowledge that you left home and kindred to come and help the poor Queen makes you, if possible, more dear to me."

"And do you really love our Princess Angel?" she asked, forgetting all caution.

"If my life would serve her, I would give it gladly?"

"And yet you are a Frenchman; you don't know her as we do?"

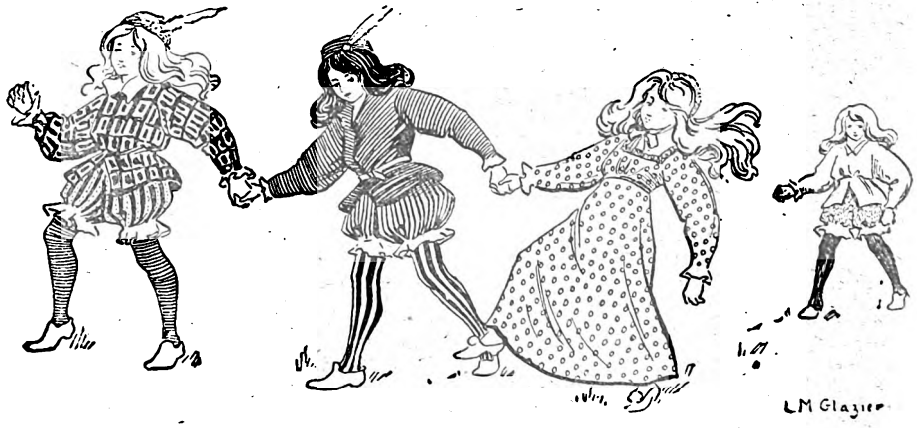
"I know that she suffers, and that she is noble and pure."

Eve held out her hand to him in an ecstasy of delight.

"How can I ever thank you for those words! They have made my heart much lighter than it has been for many a long day. I know now that she has one more faithful friend in this great, cruel city, and as her friend I will trust you. You are right, I am a girl; but Eric made me wear this dress to protect me from annoyance on the journey. I am sure you are noble and good, I do trust you, and—" she added shyly, "I think—I could learn to love—you."

In her own mind she was not sure that she did not do so already.

(To be continued.)



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A Note and a Telegram.

When I left the train at Elmwood and found that no one was there to meet me, I was surprised. I made inquiry of the porter.

"Wasn't Mr. Torrington's carriage here to meet this train?" I asked.

The man shook his head.

"It was down for the three o'clock," he replied. "Took a gentleman off."

This announcement served to increase my perplexity. Here I, having been formally invited to a house and having formally accepted, was compelled to make my way thither in a public conveyance, while another had been met at the station and carried off in comfort. Over this unusual condition of affairs I puzzled my brain on the drive out to Torrington's. The discomfort of my position was not lessened by the fact that the dinner-hour was rapidly approaching, and that I was hungry. But at length we rattled through the gates and up the drive to the house.

Maria Torrington greeted me at the door, and it struck me that there was confusion in her tone.

"I'm very glad to see you," she said; "it's a surprise, indeed."

"Surprise?" I said. "You knew I was coming."

"Er—yes," she murmured hesitatingly. "But it's so late we'd given you up. You must hurry for dinner. Hobson, show Mr. Bottomley his room."

Here a tall figure loomed out of the darkness into the foreground, and before I could follow the servant who had taken my bag, my hand was seized, and a heavy voice said:

"Hello, old man! Glad to see you!"

"Why, hello, Brooks!" I exclaimed. "I'm glad to see you."

Glad to see the man with whom I had been racing for two years for the fair prize, Maria! When I was alone, I stamped the floor vigorously, and tore open my bag with such violence as to send the contents scattering. This thing was getting unpleasant. I found it hard to forgive her for asking Dick Brooks and myself at the same time, and driving him home in triumph, while I was left to take a fly.

I was angry—so angry that I went down to dinner with tan shoes on, and when I finally entered the drawing-room the family awaiting me, I remembered that I had forgotten to brush my hair, and was conscious that it was all standing out at the back. It seemed that, flustered and dishevelled, I was making a very poor show in comparison with the immaculate Brooks.

"I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Torrington cordially. "It's a special pleasure, as we understood you weren't——"

Maria glanced sharply at her mother, and the kindly woman stopped, flushed, and added:

"As we were afraid you weren't coming."

During the dinner several remarks were made which indicated surprise at my presence, and I mentally vowed to have an explanation from Maria. After dinner I succeeded in inducing her to walk on the lawn.

"Now tell me why there is all this surprise on the part of you and your family," I said, when we were out of hearing.

"I think we had cause to be surprised," she said coldly.

"Cause?" I cried. "I received a note from your mother on Thursday asking me down for to-day. I accepted."

"You declined," she said, in a tone that brooked no contradiction, "and so I telegraphed to Dick to come down. See what a position you placed me in. I couldn't let him know he was second fiddle."

We had stopped walking, and she stood facing me in the light of a window. Her glance was one of deep

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reproach. "We are always glad to have you, as you know, but this time it is just a little embarrassing."

"But I accepted," I maintained stoutly.

"Your note said plainly, 'I regret that another engagement prevents my——'"

I broke into a hearty laugh.

"What are you laughing about? I don't see anything particularly amusing."

"Why, Maria," I said, "it was my fault, and until this minute it never occurred to me. I got your mother's note on Thursday. I had an engagement to meet a lawyer late this afternoon to try to settle a case I am concerned in. As I couldn't attend to the business and catch the train in time to get here to dinner, I determined to try and postpone the matter. So I wrote two notes—one accepting, the other declining the invitation, to be used according to success or failure. I took them both up to town next day, and as the attorney consented to my postponing the interview, I posted the acceptance."

"You mean you got them mixed and sent the wrong one," she said. A half smile lighted her face for an instant, to give place to a settled look of displeasure.

She turned sharply, and, carrying herself with exaggerated erectness, entered the house, I following crestfallen at her heels.

The next morning I could see that Brooks was trying to get Maria by herself, and at last he succeeded. They strolled in the direction of the pond.

For a time I chafed in the library, but my feelings proved too much for me, and I went out.

My steps carried me in the direction of a pond, over a stretch of lawn, through a grove, till I halted at the sight of two hats protruding over the top of a bush a few yards away.

"Maria," I heard Brooks say in earnest tones, "I have waited now for a year for an answer. Sometimes my hopes——"

I whistled to the collie that had been bounding along near by, and when Maria Torrington and her companion stepped hurriedly into view I cried: "Hello!"

For a moment all of us must have looked foolish. The silence was broken by the girl. She had completely recovered her composure, and, fixing her eyes on me, said: "Harry, as you have doubtless heard, Dick—Mr. Brooks—has just asked me to marry him."

"Asked for the thousandth time," muttered Brooks sheepishly.

I could not hide a smile at his embarrassment, but my amusement was of short life.

"And you have also asked me," Maria Torrington went on, with a coolness that astounded me.

"Yes," I said stupidly, "asked you frequently."

"I like you both very much," she said, fixing her eyes on Brooks, who was fumbling his stick among the leaves.

It hardly seemed fair that she should look so kindly on my rival, so I called her eyes back to me by asking: "Can't you choose between us?"

"No," she replied, after a moment of thoughtful silence. "I've tried very hard, but I can't. A plan of choosing was suggested to me by your unexpected coming."

We waited for her to continue.

"There is an old saying about marriage being a lottery. I propose to increase the chances. If you two consent, I shall carry out at once the scheme that I have evolved after carefully thinking."

"Are we to toss a penny?" I asked.

"No. This afternoon I shall write two notes, one an acceptance, the other a refusal. They will be put into plain envelopes, mixed up, directed and posted. You will both know by to-morrow morning."

There was a long silence, and then Maria looked from one to the other of us and said earnestly: "You'll agree to my plan, won't you?"

"There is nothing else we can do," said I.

"Nothing," repeated Brooks.

The scheme rather appealed to me, for of late things had not been going so smoothly as I could have desired. It had seemed at times as though Brooks was drawing away from me in the race. Now a chance had been offered. Once for all the question would be settled. My luck was usually good. The plan was not so agreeable to my rival. Doubtless he felt that he had the advantage of me, and in entering into such a scheme was gambling to obtain what was already almost his own. He had no other course but to assent, though, and he did it with rather bad grace.

I was up early next morning at my rooms in town. I had calculated everything to a nicety. The postman would reach the house at 8.10 o'clock; the train for Elmwood left at nine o'clock. Provided the contents of the note that I expected were satisfactory, I would just have time to breakfast and reach the station. Should the note prove to be wrong, I certainly would not need any breakfast, and much less to catch a train.

The chances seemed all in my favour now.

Having brought myself to a state of comparative confidence, I began to pack a couple of bags full of clothes, for I had made up my mind to make a long stay at the Torrington house while I was about it. As I stuffed my golf things into a portmanteau, I pictured to myself the splendid time I would have with Maria.

A loud knock at the door called me back to realities, and when I received a square envelope addressed in a small, angular hand I realised that perhaps, after all, my joy had been premature. The note was brief, so brief that in an instant I comprehended its contents, sank into a chair, and, tossing the paper from me, repeated the fatal words:

"Miss Torrington regrets that owing to another engagement she cannot accept Mr. Blank's kind invitation to become his wife."

Why had I ever consented to risk all on a mere throw of the dice? Why—but no speculation could alter it now; I would go abroad. I would exile myself rather than witness one minute of his triumph. I would take the very next steamer——

No! After all it would but add to the satisfaction of my rival to have me eating my heart out in some foreign city. Far better to stay where I was, to work and become famous, to bring home to the girl a full sense of what she had lost by her foolish lottery.

Would a true-hearted girl—a girl worth having—have played with a man's love as she had done? She was a flirt—a confirmed flirt! How lucky was I in getting the wrong note! How fortunate!

I sprang from my chair and danced round the room, singing a snatch from a song. A bag, half packed for the journey, caught my eye, and in a frenzy of joy I kicked it and sent the contents flying over the floor.

A knock at the door interrupted the celebration of my good fortune. It was the servant with a telegram.

I opened it and read:

"Dreadful mistake. Letters got mixed. Sent you wrong note. Come to me.—Maria."

Wilson James.

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His Excellency the Fool.

FROM THE GERMAN OF HUGO KLEIN.

Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Even the King laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, while his courtiers, from the general in command of his Majesty's troops down to little Biberitz, the dullest page that ever carried a lady's train, echoed their sovereign's hilarity.

And what had caused all this merriment? Someone had played a mischievous trick on "His Excellency the Fool"—otherwise Baron von Gundling. At the moment that he had entered the audience chamber, there had appeared at the opposite door a diminutive ape, clad in a costume exactly like that worn by the Baron. The little creature, which had evidently been well trained for the comedy, approached the King, bowed deferentially, and presented a petition. One of the courtiers took the paper, and with feigned gravity read the contents aloud to the assembled company. In his petition, the ape stated that he was the only son and heir of Baron von Gundling, who cruelly and persistently refused to acknowledge or support his child. The ill-treated child, therefore, humbly begged his gracious Majesty's aid in securing his legal rights, as well as kindly recognition from his lawful parent.

The laughing courtiers surrounded von Gundling and overwhelmed him with reproaches for his cruelty to his son and heir. The scene was very amusing, and his Majesty was greatly entertained. Even "His Excellency the Fool," joined in the boisterous hilarity—he had enough sense left to feel that to resent the insult would only incite his tormentors to fresh ridicule.

His Majesty had now had enough of the rude sport; he turned on his heel and quitted the audience chamber, followed by his laughing suite, who were eager to repeat throughout the city the latest joke on "His Excellency the Fool."

The echo of their voices yet resounded in the corridors when von Gundling threw himself into a chair and covered his face with both hands, while bitter sobs of anger and grief burst from his tortured heart. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder and a grave voice pronounced his name.

"Paul!"

The fool lifted his head and turned inquiringly towards the speaker.

"Ah, is it you, brother-in-law?" he exclaimed with a half suppressed sob.

"Yes, Paul; come with me. I want to talk with you."

The Baron nodded and rose to his feet. He knew very well what would be the subject of their conversation; but in his sober moments he was always ready to hear disparaging comments on the ignoble *rôle* he was compelled to play in the gay court. Always in his sober moments he felt the bitterest humiliation; and he now longed to pour out his heart to this friend who had witnessed the degrading scene with the ape.

Herr von Ilgen led the way to his room in another wing of the palace. Von Gundling seated himself in a chair near one of the open windows. Herr von Ilgen did not at once begin the conversation, but thoughtfully paced the floor for several moments, from time to time casting a searching glance towards the silent man near the window.

"Paul," he began at last, halting beside his brother-in-law, "what misfortune brought you—you, once the ornament of the university—to such a pass?"

"Are you really curious to hear my story, Ilgen? It is a fool's history—but an instructive one for all that," he added with sudden bitterness.

"I do not ask out of mere curiosity, brother," returned Herr von Ilgen, but because I am ready and willing to do all in my power to help you out of this position."

The Baron shook his head hopelessly.

"That is not so easy a task as you imagine, my friend, the evil is too firmly rooted. The devil of a wine cup has too firm a hold on me. My degradation began in Berlin. You remember what a sensation there was when I was appointed a professor in the university at Halle? I was very young for so important a position; but the King, who was my patron, had confidence in my ability to perform the work. You know how zealously I devoted myself to my profession? I won many friends. A brilliant future lay before me. Then came the turning point of my life.

"You have no idea how beautiful she is!" after a while he went on, pursuing aloud his train of thought. "Picture to yourself a slender, lissome form, with the majestic bearing of a queen; a pale, pure face, with a pair of dark eyes that can enchant you with a smile and freeze you with their hauteur."

"Who is she?" abruptly inquired Herr von Ilgen.

Paul looked up in surprise.

"You don't know her?" he exclaimed. "Ah, then you will hardly understand my story. She is the daughter of the distinguished historian, Monsieur de Larrey. He came to Halle to examine some ancient manuscripts and during the three months he was

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absorbed in his work he left me to entertain his daughter, who had accompanied him.

"It may seem strange to you that Monsieur de Larrey was willing to trust his daughter to the intimate companionship of an entire stranger; but if you were acquainted with Jeanne de Larrey, you would understand that her father ran no risk in trusting her in any society. There is about her an indescribable something that renders her as unapproachable as an iceberg. She is accustomed to the society of the most distinguished women of our age. She has travelled everywhere. She speaks fluently a dozen languages; she can repeat in the most faultless original whole pages of Homer. The world I had learnt to know amid my studies was not peopled with such women; nor were those with whom I associated in any way like Jeanne de Larrey."

"You must have fallen very deeply in love with her," observed Herr von Ilgen, when Paul stopped to draw another long breath.

"Must have fallen in love with her," repeated slowly the Baron. "Yes, but the feeling that took possession of me was very different from the sentiment usually called love. I loved—nay, love her all my life. The confidential manner she adopted toward me from the very first day we met, allowed me no confidences in return. She would tell me about her lovers—about a certain English baronet who was enamoured of her—and arouse my most jealous fears. In short, her smiles made me happy, her hauteur cast me into the depths of despair. But I felt all the time that there was no hope for me. Even if she loved me, her pride would never allow her heart to decide in my favour."

"Did you never tell her that you loved her?" asked von Ilgen.

"Yes, at least, I gave her to understand that I adored her. I told her my love in a story, but her reply chilled me. I knew that she had understood me. In silence we retraced our steps to the city. Neither of us spoke again until we reached the paved streets. I felt as if a world had been annihilated. Just before leaving her at the door of her lodgings, I summoned courage to say:

"'Were you in earnest, mademoiselle?'

"'About my opinion of the love question in that incident you related?' she asked lightly.

"'Yes.'

"'Certainly I was in earnest.'"

He ceased, overpowered by painful recollections.

After a pause, Herr von Ilgen said:

"What happened afterwards?"

Paul laughed harshly.

"What happened? The rest is easily told. Jeanne was able to control her heart, but I—I was not so strong. I made illness an excuse for not calling on her again, and soon afterwards her father completed his work, and they left the city. Monsieur de Larrey came to bid me good-bye; Jeanne sent me a few cold lines of farewell. Here is the letter," taking from his breast-pocket a worn, faded paper, and extending it toward his brother, who refused, with a gesture of repugnance, to take it.

"I was very ill for several months," resumed Paul, carefully returning the letter to his breast. "I sought forgetfulness in study. My illustrious patron appointed me professor of history in the academy which he had founded for the sons of noblemen. Perhaps hard work would, in the end have cured my disappointment, but the King died, and his favourite academy was closed.

"His successor took me into his service; conferred on me the patent of nobility, and gave me the post of chamberlain. My sole task now was to entertain his Majesty at dinner, and in the evenings, when state affairs did not occupy him. It was an easy position, but for me a most unfortunate one. I led the life of an idler. I had too much time to think. There was no work to drive torturing thoughts from my brain.

"One day at dinner I happened to take too much wine. I was surprised to find what a singular effect it had upon me. It made me forget. I was gay, cheerful. All trouble had vanished from my heart. That is how I became a drunkard! Spare me, dear friend, a further recital of my downfall! I became a willing tippler, because wine brought oblivion; but it changed the once dignified professor into a buffoon, a clown. The King once in jest, called me 'His Excellency the Fool,' and the name clung to me. I am now what you see; a miserable sot—the court fool, the sport, the jest of every blackguard who chooses to mock me. Last week they had this costume made for me, and I wear it by His Majesty's order."

"Shameful! Atrocious!" indignantly interposed Herr von Ilgen's voice. "I shall take it upon myself to punish the miscreants who dare to do——"

"No, no!" interrupted Paul. "Why should you? They do only what my conduct gives them the right to do. Can I ask them to respect me when I have no respect for myself? I deserve their ridicule, and find consolation in the wine cup. My fate is sealed. I have neither the strength nor the desire to change my mode of existence. My ambition, my hopes, my love, all lie buried on the mountain where I told Jeanne of my love. Let me go my way, brother. Let me drink—and forget!"

Herr von Ilgen found that further remonstrance was useless. He determined, however, that the diplomatic errand which had brought him to Potsdam should also prove his brother-in-law's salvation.

A few days later, Baron von Gundling heard, while at an entertainment at the palace, a piece of news that affected him deeply. The French historian, Monsieur de Larrey, so it was said, and his daughter, the celebrated beauty, had arrived at Potsdam, and were to be presented at court.

This intelligence filled the poor court fool's heart with renewed bitterness. Although he still longed to behold once more the fair face which had so enslaved his soul, he felt that he must forego the painful pleasure. Consequently, on the day Monsieur de Larrey and his daughter were expected at court, "His Excellency the Fool" drank so deeply of the cup which gave him oblivion, that he had to be carried to bed, and eighteen hours passed before he roused from his drunken stupor. When he became quite himself again Herr von Ilgen appeared before him and said:

"Paul, I want you to go somewhere with me, but not in that buffoon's dress. Put on your black clothes."

Without a question or demur, the Baron obeyed. They drove to the Holland quarters of the city, where the carriage stopped in front of a handsome villa. They rang, and were admitted by a servant in livery, who conducted them to a lofty reception hall.

In a few moments the soft rustle of feminine garments was heard approaching, and before von Gundling could realise what had happened, Jeanne de Larrey, more majestic than ever, stood before him.

A mist suddenly obscured the court fool's vision—the meeting was so unexpected, so unhoped for! His self command utterly deserted him; his throat seemed compressed by a band of steel. Without a word he bent

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over the hand extended in cordial greeting toward him, and covered it with tears and kisses.

"Are you really so glad to see me again, professor?" she asked smilingly, but with a tremour in her voice.

He merely bowed. He was not yet able to command his voice.

"And yet you have no greeting for me!" she added gaily.

"How beautiful—you are—mademoiselle!" he stammered confusedly, unable to say more.

"What! You have become a flatterer! You, the grave professor, have learnt court manners? But come, let us sit down and chat together as we used to at Halle. First, tell me about yourself. What have you been doing all these months? Are you still angry with me? And how did you manage to forget me so entirely?"

The half jesting, half earnest question suddenly brought the court fool to a consciousness of his situation. He turned as if to seek help from his brother-in-law, but that wily diplomat had retired.

"Where is my brother-in-law?" asked Paul helplessly.

"He is probably with my father, with whom he has business of importance," replied Jeanne.

And now he understood why his brother had brought him here! He was to be lectured by this haughty beauty. His face darkened. This poor sot who permitted all the world to humiliate him, would not submit to one word of reproach from the woman he adored.

Jeanne noted the change in his manner, and fearing that she had too soon touched upon a painful subject, hastened to add:

"My father will be delighted to see you. He has not forgotten how kind you were to us."

But Paul paid no attention to these words. Instead, he said slowly, fixing his eyes upon her face:

"How did I manage to forget you, mademoiselle? I managed it admirably. I became the court fool."

Jeanne grew pale and trembled—not at his words, for she had heard of his downfall. It was his tone, his glance, that frightened her.

"And that is not all, Mademoiselle de Larrey," he continued. "You shall hear more, since you are interested in my fate. I am a drunkard, a sot, who is happy only with a full bottle. Ah, turn in abhorrence and disgust from one so utterly vile! I do not blame you. I am a low, vulgar buffoon, not fit to breathe the same atmosphere with one pure and proud as you!"

"Herr von Gundling!" she gasped in a beseeching tone.

But a harsh, grating voice interrupted her.

"Rejoice, mademoiselle, rejoice at your work—at your work! Do you hear? It was to forget you that I lost my wits in wine. I know very well that the rose is innocent when her fragrance intoxicates the butterfly; that the star cannot help it if her brilliance dazzles mortal eyes. Nor are you, mademoiselle, to blame that your rare loveliness enchanted my soul. No, you are not to blame for winning my love; but that you loved me, and allowed your pride to scorn my love—for that I blame you. Don't turn away; don't hide your face. You cannot deny it—you loved me! You succeeded once in quieting the voice of your heart. Will you hereafter be able to silence your conscience? Answer me, mademoiselle!"

All the bitterness, all the misery, that had accumulated for years in his sore heart rushed, an overwhelming flood, from his lips in this passionate accusation.

Pale, silent, and trembling, Jeanne waited until he had concluded. Then, unable to control herself, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

At this outburst of long-suppressed feeling, Paul's anger suddenly vanished. All his suffering was forgotten. He flung himself on his knees at her feet, drew down her hands, and covered them with passionate kisses.

"Forgive—forgive—Jeanne," he murmured, with quivering lips and burning eyes. "I am so unutterably wretched I know not what I say. Jeanne—Jeanne—say that you forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" sobbed Jeanne, bending towards him and laying her hands on his shoulders. "Forgive me, Paul. I deserve your reproaches, your accusations; but believe me, I do bitterly regret my miserable pride. My life has not been happier than your own, for I could not forget either. But I am here to atone for my folly. I rejected your love when you offered it to me. Will you in turn refuse mine? Look up, Paul, dear Paul, for this alone I came here. I want to be your wife."

A few days later the betrothal of Herr von Gundling to the daughter of the French historian was announced at court.

There was a decided sensation. The courtiers marvelled greatly at Mademoiselle de Larrey's choice, for it was well known that she had refused a score of distinguished suitors.

It was Jeanne's wish that her engagement should be made public. She wanted all the world to know that she was the future wife of the scorned "court fool." This was her atonement.

Many jests were made at the expense of the "fortunate clown," and brilliant plans for the celebration of his marriage were concocted in the King's audience chamber. A fitting procession should escort the bridal pair to the altar; there should be all sorts of festivities; the courtiers would arrange a series of tableaux to represent "The Triumph of Folly" and the "Fool's Reward."

But these brilliant intentions were never carried out. The fool, so it was said, fell ill; so seriously ill, indeed, that no one was permitted to see him. His illness lasted for several weeks. The marriage festivities and tableaux were indefinitely postponed, because the wedding took place in the sick-room, no one being present except the immediate relatives of the bride and groom.

Two days after the ceremony the court learnt with surprise that von Gundling, the court fool, was dead. Then the thoughtless crowd wantonly decided to make a parade of the funeral. They insisted upon taking the coffin and burning it. They never thought to look inside.

At the same hour, a close travelling carriage rolled swiftly along the highway towards Dresden. Within the carriage sat a lovely woman, the dark-eyed Jeanne von Gundling, but no one would have recognised in the sturdy postilion on the box the former court fool.

For the last time von Gundling wore the livery of servitude. When the hour came for him to remove his coachman's coach and hat, he would be a free man. He urged the steeds into swifter pace, that they might more quickly bear him from the scene of his disgrace and humiliation.

And when, after many days, they arrived in the friendly land, another postilion occupied the coachman's seat, and by the side of the lovely woman in the carriage sat her happy husband, who never wearied of whispering tender words.

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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to meet the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route.

CHAPTER XII.

John Hardy and Yen How.

Dr. Yen How was seated in a garden of the Imperial City, looking at his hands.

He was arrayed in sumptuous robes of the softest, richest silk, embroidered with the tongue-darting Dragon, in token of high rank.

His pigtail reached to his calves; but, at present, only one inch and a half of it was of the doctor's own hair. The rest was artificial—made of fine black silk. Many dignitaries of even the highest rank in China adopt this device.

Yen How, a minute or two before, had drawn the chopsticks between his lips as the final ceremony to a dainty feed on rice-birds (just then in season) and the juiciest, tenderest tea. The meal had been held before him by attendants in gorgeous robes, themselves of high rank.

The ice-bound Winter of Northern China was over. The sudden, hot Spring was here.

By the right hand of Yen How was a stand of ebony arabesqued in walrus-tusk. On it was some of the pigment which the Chinese use for ink, and some of the brushes which they use for pens; there were also some folios of fine silk paper; there was a silver gong; and, half falling to the ground, the *North China Daily News*.

In Yen How's hands was an old copy of the *Shanghai Mercury*. Yen How was reading it; and as he read, his eyes went small in a smile. Something amused the doctor.

It was this: Herr von Bülow, the German Foreign Minister, had, a good many months before, made a remark in the Reichstag which was reproduced later on in the *Mercury*. Von Bülow had said: "The Chinese Empire has already lasted 4,300 years; it will last another 3,000."

"He did not mean it," murmured Yen How, "because he is a fool. But a fool may sometimes say a true thing, without meaning it."

At the same time he touched on his breast the decoration of the Red Eagle of the First Class, which the German Emperor had conferred upon him immediately after the grant by China of the territories to Germany.

Then he went on with his slow, contemplative reading.

We have spoken of the meteoric career of this man in China; we said that he "rose like a rocket." But let it not be supposed that he did all this by miracle. A rocket will not rise of itself; it must be impelled by an upward, quite accountable, force.

To what did Yen How owe his supreme authority?—for his authority was now far more supreme than that of any

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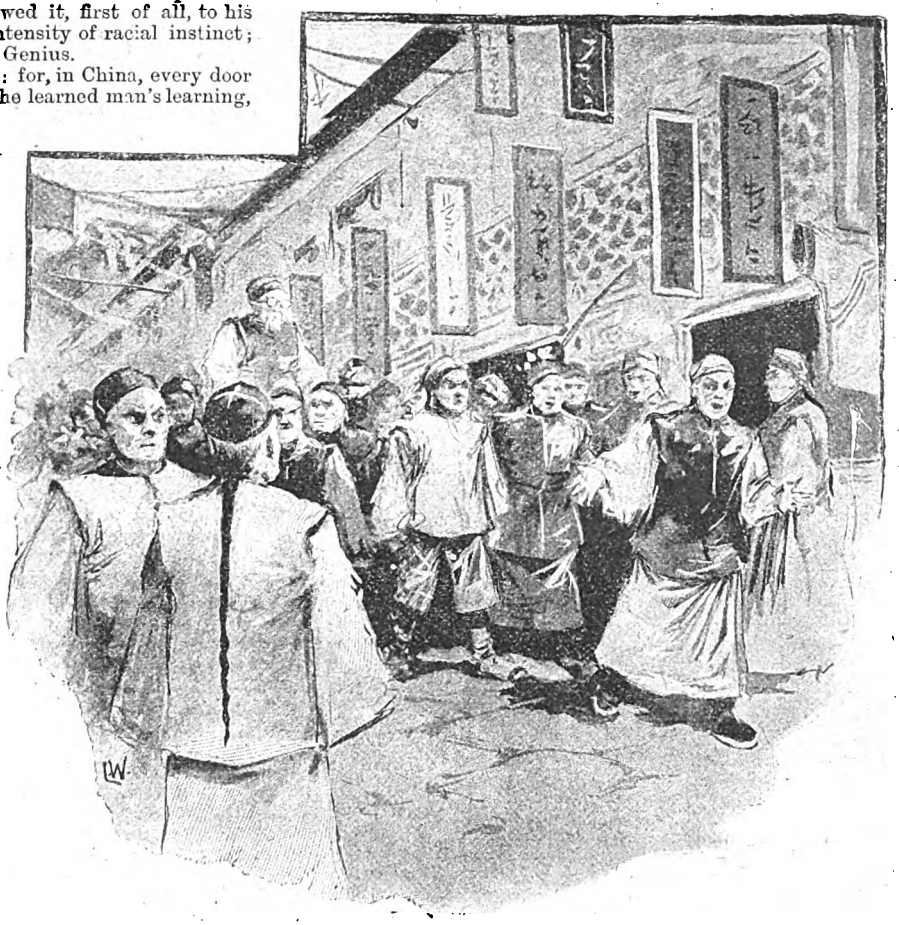
Brother of the Sun and Moon who ever occupied the thereon of the Hsüs. He owed it, first of all, to his Learning; secondly, to his intensity of racial instinct; and thirdly, to his audacious Genius.

To his Learning, first of all: for, in China, every door is open to the learned man. The learned man's learning, however, must be *Chinese;* and here was the miracle of Dr. Yen How's achievements in the State Examination Halls of Canton and Pekin: that he who there proved himself more instructed than the pundits in Chinese wisdom, had spent the greater part of his life in acquiring Western scientific views and methods in Heidelberg, Paris, and Edinburgh.

He began at the bottom He passed through the examination at Canton. The "Hall" is not a hall at all, but a double row of small sentry-boxes, each capable of holding one person only, in which the examinee, provided with food, ink, brushes, and paper, spends two solitary weeks, seeing no one, answering his questions. He usually comes out more like a dead than a living man, and, even for the most erudite, the ordeal is one of fire.

During that fortnight of dark seclusion, Yen How smiled, and smiled, and smiled again. He was examined on the complex Theology, the fanciful History, the intricate old Law, the amazing Astronomy of the Chinese. In all these subjects, and many more, their Learning consists of an immense range of minute dogmatism, which the whole lifetime of their wise men is spent in acquiring. Yen How's big brain knew all about these subjects—more about them than his examiners. But he differed from them in this: that he alone knew the falseness of the answers which he painted. His eyes were all smiles as he sat there writing about the earth going round the sun in so many seconds, and about the place of Confucius in the third hierarchy of the gods. It was the sweetest fun to him.



He was carried to his home through the streets on the shoulders of the people.

When he came out from his sentry-box at the end of the two weeks among a number of wan and tottering men, his tough visage showed no sign of fatigue. He smiled always. He knew that he would be First on the list.

And First he was. A couple of weeks later, when the result was announced at the portal of the "Hall," he was carried to his home through the streets on the shoulders of the people.

The Chinese populace still cherish the same awe and high reverence for the Learned Man which, in Europe, was cherished in the Middle Ages for what was called "The Scholar."

Yen How at once received a summons to appear before the Viceroy of Nanking. He appeared. A choice of two things was put before him: he might either accept a Judgeship in the Province of Kiang-si; or he might go north, and compete in another examination at Pekin, where, if he was moderately successful, he would possibly obtain a post in the Inner Court of the Imperial City.

One offer was a certainty; the other hypothetical. But Yen How had not the slightest intention of going to be a Judge in the Province of Kiang-si. What he wanted was Ada Seward.

He went to Pekin; and very soon underwent the far sterner ordeal in the famous Examination Halls of that city. Again he was easily First on the list—a feat which at once admitted him to high honour in the Imperial Court. He had gained his *entrée.*

Another Chinaman would now have said: "I have achieved my end." Yen How said: "I have made a beginning."

But the rest was not difficult. In Oriental countries, rises, as well as falls, are rapid. "Let Hainan be hanged and let Mordecai be put in his place." The prophet Daniel rose from nothing to the supreme power in a night. Yen How did it in two months.

So great was the necessity for Western methods, and Western science, in the Government of China, that the Chinese were actually compelled at that very time to overcome their shuddering racial abhorrence of the white

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German drill sergeants were replaced by Japanese officers.

man, and to pay large salaries to white experts, in various departments, to plan and to administer. Germans drilled China's army, Britons collected her customs, Frenchmen planned her railways.

It is not possible to estimate the omnipotence which would suddenly fall into the hands of a real Chinaman who could do all this better than either German, Englishman, or Frenchman. To the Chinese tongue he was sweet as white mice preserved in honey. He became the Emperor of the Emperor.

But then, besides Knowledge and Race, Yen How had something more: he had Genius—the large Eye—the summoning Voice—the enchanter's Wand. The vastness of his outlook,—the world-dimension of his schemes,—was simply fascinating. "Talk, my son, talk," old Li would say, sitting before Yen How, holding his chin in his hand, his eyes riveted on the doctor's face; and when Yen ceased, Li would say: "Talk on, my son, talk on; your words have flavour; and the palate of the ear is led astray by them."

Yen How soon became a sort of dissipation for the aged Minister.

When Li wanted sensation, he came and sat with his chin in his hand, and listened with delicious musings to Yen. It was at Li's own suggestion that the Yellow Jacket was given to Yen How. It was among the necessities of things, and Li saw it. And at once—*without an hour's delay*—the little Heidelberg doctor began to act.

His first care was to bring about a secret treaty between Japan and China.

He had not been idle in Tokio. He had taken frequent voyages down the Peiho to Tientsin, and thence to Tokio. Of his insinuations to, and relation with, the Marquis Ito, we have spoken. But Yen How kept his most delicious plum of temptation in reserve, till the last. He then showed that however great China became, Japan would always be the mistress of China; when China was the mistress of Europe and Asia, that *meant* that Japan would be the mistress of the world. The treaty was signed. It was his first step.

Yen How saw that the navy of Japan would be absolutely necessary to his schemes. Without that nothing permanent and final could be done.

His next step was to bring about the European war.

He did it so boldly, with such a grand disregard for appearances, with such contemptuous prodigality, that it was a wonder that both his present and ultimate motives were not divined. For it must be remembered that the idea of "The Yellow Danger" was no new one to European statesmen. Again and again had the more keen-eyed of politicians pointed Eastward, and said to Europe: "The Yellow Danger! the Yellow Danger!" Only a year or so previously had Lord Charles Beresford, in a speech delivered, we think, at Hull, used words like these: "The cloud at present may seem only the size of a man's hand—but it is there; and its seemingly small size is due merely to its remoteness, not to its intrinsic smallness. What appalling fate would be that of Europe, if the yellow races, in their hundreds of millions, organised a westward march, is beyond the imagination of man to conceive." Again and again had this note of warning been sounded. But the mischief lay in this very fact: that the cloud had appeared of "the size of a man's hand." It was too remote. The idea was not yet realised and assimilated by Europe.

Still, as we say, there was nothing at all new in Yen How's idea of over-running Europe, as is proved by the fact that that phrase, "the Yellow Danger," had become quite common in everyone's ears; what *was* new, was, firstly his discernment of the fact that the yellow races would probably fail in the attempt, unless Europe were, to begin with, made ready for them by a great inter-European war; and secondly, the novel means which he took to bring about that war.

No single soul outside China and Japan suspected his *ulterior* motive of overrunning Europe when he made the grants of territory—for the cloud, though often pointed out, was like "a man's hand;" but three people, at least, suspected his *present* motive of bringing about a European war. One was a young student in the Quartier Latin in Paris; another was Sir Charles Dilke, who mentioned it as just a possibility at a dinner at the National Liberal Club; the third was a Hampshire gentleman, who, as we said in a former chapter, wrote a letter to the *Times* during the excitement preceding the war, making this suggestion of China's motive. The letter attracted little attention. This Hampshire gentleman was John Hardy.

His eye had seen.

Yen How's first step was the league with Japan; his second was the European war; his third was the organisation of China.

This last was a great task—it was stupendous. Only a new Confucius could have done it. But Yen How was quite that.

To wake a nation which has been asleep for four thousand years! To lift the arm!—and cry aloud!—and wake them in their myriads with a "Rouse ye! rouse ye! the Hour is come! The Day breaketh!" in a voice like the Trump of Doom!

The little doctor could do it,—and did it.

But again, he did not do it by miracle. He knew his way.

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The results attained by Genius, do, indeed, *look* like miracle; but they are not really so. The genius himself knows that he must use definitely precise ways and means, which, if used by anyone else in the same manner, would produce the same results. Genius is Industry—the capacity of being infinitely interested,—of taking infinite pains.

Yen How had been taking infinite pains from the day when he could first pronounce his own name.

All his acts in the organisation of China were based upon a minute and profound knowledge of the Chinese character. The principal points of this character are an immeasurable Greed, an absolute Contempt for the world outside China, and a fiendish Love of Cruelty.

It is impossible for the vilest European to conceive the dark and hideous instincts of the Chinese race.

The first thing that happened after the outbreak of the war in Europe, was a wholesale massacre of all Europeans in the East. Wholesale—but not haphazard: for Dr. Yen How was directing it. For the time being, every European became precious in his eyes—he collected them with care—he preserved them scrupulously—and he distributed them with deliberate wisdom. They were conveyed over China from Yun-nan to the villages round the Ming Tombs, and from the Yellow Sea to the Tien-Shans. No district was without its white victim. Then sounded Yen How's first trumpet blast to the nation he meant to rouse.

The Day breaks! It is morning! And at once there occurred a memorable Passover-Day through the length and breadth of China—a holiday of gore, an orgy of death, to symbolise the annihilation of the white race all the world over. When it was ended, there was not a white man or woman alive on Chinese soil, except on an island or two; all had perished in the act of undergoing the most loathsome public tortures. This Solemn Feast-day, this Sacrament of Blood, made a lasting impression upon the spirit of the Chinese race, which is very Sensitive to the suggestiveness of Symbols. Yen How had begun well. Certainly, he knew his man.

The killing of the German drill-sergeants of the Chinese Army had been left to be performed by the hands of the soldiers whom they had drilled.

The territories granted to the Continental nations were as yet unoccupied by them. The small European garrisons actually in China had been easily overpowered. And Europe was busy at home, fighting against herself. At last China was free to do as she chose.

The attitude of the nation as a whole at this moment resembled that of a sleeping cat, which hears a sound, and pricks her ears.

To say even so much of the Chinese is to say a great deal. For centuries they had laid in deep, stolid slumber without one prick of the ears. There were still many millions of them who, as Li Hung Chang had said when he visited Europe, had never so much as heard of the Chino-Japanese war.

How to stir up such a people? How to get at them and fire them, and make them act? Yen How knew.

He must first of all, now that he had given them a morning Dream of Blood, kick them hard to wake them, bruising their flesh, if necessary: then, as they rubbed their wide and startled eyes, he would preach to them the Gospels of Greed—and Race—and Cruelty.

Already, by the time John Hardy had reached Vladivostok—just about four weeks after the Battle of Shorcham—the "kicking process" was in full swing. There was a strange stirring, a movement, a new something, in old China. Men said: "What is toward? What is to be? Can these dry bones live?" The Spirit of a Man was abroad in the land—an intense Mind, a vitalising Leaven—kneading, fermenting, energising, creating.

The massacred German drill-sergeants were replaced by Japanese officers. But where there had been one German, there appeared now a thousand Japanese.

Yen How's scheme was nothing less than this: that every Chinaman should be a soldier.

Conscription in China!

Here was a lesson learnt from Europe.

But when we say "a soldier," we mean something different from what is understood by the word among us. We do not mean a man equipped with smokeless powder and magazine rifles, with Lee-Metfords, and Martinis, and Sniders. We mean only a man having some sort of arms—a club, or a dart, or a match-lock, or a poker—anything which would give him the idea that he had to fight, and which would perhaps delay his death a moment while myriads of others swept over those who had killed him. The Chinese host was to resemble a flight of locusts, covering the entire sky from horizon to horizon, each member of which was armed with some implement, not so much for the purpose of killing, as for the purpose of protracting his own death, while the rest of the host pressed forward, blighting as they went. His duty was hardly to fight, but to occupy time in dying. For this service none were too old, few too young—and women were as good as men. Yen How's army would consist of the 400,000,000 which formed the population of China.

Each corps was furnished with a vast corps-cavalry-brigade.

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Walked softly towards the great little man.

The organisation of this war-host he planned principally on the French model.

He divided the whole of China into 240 army corps regions, each containing about two million inhabitants. This arrangement included Thibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea, the heads of which countries he had long since brought into line with his plans.

In each region he quartered the principal elements of the field army corps with the necessary Staff, setting up in each region a large number of recruiting depôts, and depôts of artillery, transport, supplies of food and forage, with clothing and camp equipment.

The whole of the troops and organisation for this purpose was put under the command of the General of that particular army corps and its region. And this General was, in every case, a Japanese.

Each region was divided into two hundred subdivisions, each of the subdivisions furnishing one reginent of infantry of the line, twenty subdivisions forming an infantry brigade command, and forty subdivisions that corresponds to an infantry divisional command. Divisional commands were also intrusted exclusively to Japanese; brigade and regimental commands to the most trustworthy of the Chinese officers of the regular army.

Each corps was furnished with a vast corps-cavalry-brigade, the horses—to use an Irishism—being mules, and the weapon the long spear.

Each regiment was subdivided into three battalions, each battalion into four companies, and each company into twelve squads.

Each squad numbered from sixty to sixty-three persons, who were known by numbers, from No. 1 to No 63.

They contained children over the age of nine, women (except the wives and daughters of mandarins and other upper classes), and old men tottering on the verge of the grave. The priest and pundit classes were exempted also.

The whole nation was organised into an army.

This was one way which Yen How employed to kick and prick it into wakefulness.

Each army corps contained, besides its squadrons of cavalry and its batteries of artillery, six sections of artificers, six artillery parks, thirty companies of pontooners, one telegraph section, and forty field batteries.

But there were no field hospitals, or hospital orderlies, no ambulances, no medical provision. Yen How could afford to spare men. He had plenty.

One important feature of the army corps was the provision of armoured carts. They were to serve not only for transport, but for defence in battle, and their shape was contrived with this view, being long and low, with small wheels, and rather ponderous. One had been made, or was to be made, for each "peloton."

All this was not yet accomplished, but all was in rapid and intense progress. And the rest of the world knew nothing about it!

China, north of Tonquin, had telegraphically isolated herself.

In Japan the manufacture of guns, swords, spears, and small arms was going forward with agonised activity; and these were coming over to China in ship-loads. China's chief manufacturing energies were directed to the making of armoured carts, and the sewing together of tents.

But the drilling of China was only one half of Yen How's plan for rousing it. He knew that it was necessary to drive the nation further still, even to the verge of frenzy. He did this by taxing it.

Let it not be supposed that any part of his motive was a need of money to any pressing degree for all this war preparation. The loan raised in the previous year, which should have been spent by China in paying Japan's war-indemnity, was still in the pockets of China.

The loan had not been necessary to China at all! She could have raised sufficient to pay Japan by an issue of Treasury bonds, the purchase of which may be made compulsory in China, if they are not subscribed to voluntarily.

Or she could have called upon the various Viceroys to wring enough out of the mercantile and agricultural classes.

But neither loan, nor bonds, nor Viceroy extortion had been necessary! Japan was not anxious to get this large sum into her hands. She would have had to find some profitable investment for it, as she could not, of course, lay out eleven millions sterling in warships at an hour's notice. Her mere credit was good enough for the building of the vessels she needed; and the money, paid over to Japan, would simply have lain in the Bank of England to Japan's credit. As a matter of fact, in the secret treaty between the Marquis Ito and Yen How, the payment of the idemnity was remitted altogether.

From this source alone China was, for the present, rich; but under the guidance of an exact administrative brain like Yen How's, she was vastly richer still from quite other sources.

China, in reality, was never a poor country; on the contrary, she was potentially about the richest in the world. Manchuria was an El Dorado of gold. The mineral mines of Kwang-tung, Heilung-Chiang and the Kirin provinces had been the envy of the nations. But the curse of China had been her official class. The greed of the mandarin had throttled every industry. The heavy *likin* charges, which went, nearly all of it, into the pockets of its collectors

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stifled many an industry. The Government income was estimated at two hundred and ten million taels, but only seventy million of this—one third—was accounted for. On the remainder the mandarins wallowed in fatness.

Yen How's eyes screwed up into a smile, and he said "No more of that, my son!"

The substance of what he said, and what he did was this: "You are to extort, you are to squeeze, and plunder, and grind the people ten times—a hundred times—more than you ever did before—till they perish like sheep of it. But this time you are going to do it, not for your own benefit, but for *my* benefit, and for the benefit of China. I, Yen How, have said it, and will see to it."

Within two months after his attainment of the supreme power, he had created a Board, formed on the lines of the Imperial Maritime Customs, for a clean-handed collection of the internal revenues. It contained some Chinese officials, but consisted mostly of Japanese.

The immediate effect of this change was an increase—by tens and hundreds—of the revenues which began to pour into the Treasury of Pekin.

From the working of the mines, specially organised and superintended by Yen How himself, a vast increment of wealth began to flow into the swollen coffers of China.

Yen How was not popular. He was kicking and pricking poor sleepy China into unpleasant wakefulness. But he knew that he had the sweetest oil in store to salve her bruises at the right moment.

All these measures of his would have spelt insurrection, revolution at another time—the introduction of the Japanese element, especially, into the new life of China was very distasteful to the people. But now the stern universal military organisation nipped every thought of rebellion in the bud.

If you want to turn a two-legged beast into a man—drill him, straighten his spine, make a soldier of him. He will never be a hopelessly unintelligent animal after that.

Yen How was drilling the Chinese beast, straightening his spine. By the time the beast could look round twice to tear whoever it was that was disturbing his slumber, lo, he was already turned into a man, with sufficient intelligence to see that there was no resisting this new Power which had him in its grip.

The Chinese, when they saw no help for it, began to fraternise with the ubiquitous Japanese element introduced into their midst. Yen How had foreseen this. They had already, more or less, learnt to submit to the domination of white men. And the Jap was much less a foreign devil than the white man. On reflection he was judged to be an improvement. On reflection, Yen How, too, would, in time, be judged to be an improvement.

But, meanwhile, he wore a secret steel plate over his breast.

The people of China were being terribly oppressed and badgered.

The order of the day was drill, drill, drill—tax, tax, tax—work, work, work—all over the land.

As yet no one knew why all this was—what was in the mind of the gods above. Yen How had not yet begun to preach his three Gospels to the people.

So matters stood, when on the 18th of April, Yen How sat in his garden, near a little tea-house, reading an old Shanghai *Mercury*.

An attendant opened a little door in the courtyard, walked softly towards the great little man, and prostrated himself before him.

"Speak on," said Yen How.

"A white man has been captured at Monkden, Your Excellency, by soldiers of the Liao-Tong division, and sent on to Pekin. They have just arrived at the Palace—and await your instructions."

"Let him be taken to the Imperial Prison-house for the night," said Yen How, "and beheaded at sunrise to-morrow."

He went on reading. The servant made an obeisance, and turned away.

Do not call the man back, Yen How! Let him go and do your bidding, and read your paper, and be at peace! For this is John Hardy that you have ordered to be slain—and he is as strong as the rocks, and the strong earth, and the sky, and the stars in their courses fight for him!

But Yen How called the man back.

"Stop!" he cried.

The attendant returned.

"What nation is he of?" asked Yen How.

"His interpreter says that he is an Englishman, Your Excellency."

"Let him be brought before me here."

And Yen How went on reading his paper.

(*To be continued.*)

THE VERY BEST PAPER.

THE very best paper for Sunday reading is, undoubtedly, *The Sunday Reader*; a paper which at the present time seems to have attained the highest possible standard of excellence. This is accounted for by the fact that *The Sunday Reader* has been going in for improvements.

It is now compact in size, and contains thirty-two pages, crammed with interesting articles, amusing anecdotes, brightly written interviews, striking illustrations, and stirring stories, in addition to which there is a remarkable serial running through its pages which surpasses everything which has ever been published in its own line.

Here are some of the subjects which are dealt with in this week's *Sunday Reader*; there is an interview with a blind gentleman who spends his life in visiting and cheering the blind population of London; there is an account of the quietest sanctuary in the world; a church which is, in fact, built in the heart of an immense boulder, and dozens of other articles.

EVERY WEEK.] **THE SUNDAY READER.** [ONE PENNY

ALL LOVERS OF GOOD FICTION

should take care to secure a copy of this week's *Home Notes* and start reading the grand new serial novel entitled:

"Playing for High Stakes,"

by Mrs. C. N. Williamson. The story is one of absorbing interest and is full of surprises from beginning to end.

In addition to the new serial *Home Notes* is full of bright articles and stories and a more than usually good novel is published in *Home Notes Library* this week. The whole form

ONE OF THE MOST MARVELLOUS PENNYWORTHS

ever offered to the public.

PICK-ME-UP.

Note the New Features:

"The Great Pirate Syndicate," a grand serial story, by George Griffith, author of "The Angel of the Revolution," etc., etc., has just commenced.

"Pick-Me-Up Interviews," with Cartoons.

Short Story.

Pictures by the most eminent black and white artists.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY, ONE PENNY.

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THEY were two, Wilhelm and Frederika Brahm, and they twain were one flesh. She, tall and massive of build; he, taller and spare unto leanness. Their little cottage home stood on a populous street of a populous South African city. Everything inside was dingy and crowded. Everything outside was smothered in plants and vines.

The twain lived there alone; they and Fritz, the tiny black and tan, who was child and messenger and guard in one. The three sat out in front every evening from early spring-time till late autumn; she just within the little hall-way, filling up the door; he outside on the miniature piazza, or else down on the grass; the terrier, anywhere that he could best show his importance and his devotion.

Perchance a passer-by halted a moment to speak a pleasant word to the "Kaiser"—for so we called him by reason of his lofty ways—or to listen silently to the strains of the sweet old violin he was wont to play. The good wife spoke English so brokenly that she did not often do more than smile in her broad way; and Fritz usually barked desperately at every interference.

It was the impression that the Kaiser had scraped together a great deal of money. People came to overlook his silent ways, his close living, his unsocial habits, when they got wind that he was very rich. Poor people may be mean; the rich are only eccentric.

So the years dragged along, and they still sat out at twilight. Often he read aloud to her from a German paper; more often he drew his bow softly in wailing minor strains that told a tale of heart-hunger in a strange land. *Heimweh* quivered and sobbed along the strings, but none ever dared to speak to him of his hopes, his regrets, or his losses.

Winter came and drove the Brahms indoors. The first time I saw them out again was one mild spring evening, after my return from a prolonged visit out of town. I was struck with the change in the Kaiser's appearance. He was pallid unto ghostliness. Involuntarily I halted at the gate, and Fritzie went mad at my audacity.

Mrs. Brahm answered my unspoken query.

"Mein Villem" (so she called her Wilhelm) "have been awful ill. I don't shust know if he vould be vell some more."

"What has been the trouble?" I asked, and I knew my face was full of sympathy.

"We don't know vat it ish, but he ish weak, und he can't eat nodings no more."

Her voice stopped in a wail which Fritzie promptly echoed, his piercing eyes gazing into hers with the anguish of his own impotency.

The neighbourhood began holding conferences on the old man's looks. Clearly he was in a decline. They were wont to say he had only to close his eyes to end it all. May and June went by, and he began to shrivel up like yellow parchment. Still he sat under the clustering vines; still he drew out the long hose to water his flowers and the dusty street, feebly directing the stream upon his own domain, and not an inch upon his neighbour's dust. He still managed, too, to play the old violin.

The July heat closed in about him, and day by day the passers-by noted how he grew sparer and more cadaverous. He and his old wife had not made friends, and now, in their impending trouble, not even the most sympathising would intrude upon them. Ugly stories had got out that they were too miserly to eat enough; that they would not give away a bit of fruit, not if it wasted before their eyes. I knew better. I did not believe all I heard.

One Sunday, Ethel and Margie started to Sunday-school, when in a moment they came hurrying back to tell me there was crape on Kaiser Brahm's door. He was gone, then—the struggle was over. Towards nightfall I went. Two of the neighbours sat there in dutiful attendance, but silent and awkward. For the first time I penetrated the family room, a little square chamber close and full of stuffiness. Mrs. Brahm was not crying. She was flushed and flurried, and talked without stopping. She turned to me as a fresh and welcome listener, when I entered with words of solemn inquiry upon my lips.

"It vas his liver—his liver vas so long bad—he vent to town und he shust could git back. He said, shust feel his heart beat, und I send for de doctor. I said he must not walk any more like dot. Und de doctor, he give him de morphine. Dot killed him."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Brahm!" I hastened to reassure her. "Perhaps he would have suffered too much without it."

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"No," she stubbornly insisted, "I dinks not. He did not vish to take de morphine—he said he vould not.

"He made his vill," she added in an elated way; "he give me all de dings vhat he had. I have blenty of moneys and houses."

How proud she was. She was quiet through the funeral. It was all cold and formal, I thought. But the "knights" of the local "order" to which he belonged, with their nodding plumes and glittering uniform, had a look of royalty in her eyes. She fancied her Wilhelm was going down into the grave with all the pomp and circumstance of power—the insignia of rank; and it gratified her. In her simple way she overestimated its significance.

After the first day the neighbours fell away. Mrs. Brahm did not encourage them to come. But she was on my heart, poor, lonely old *Frau*. The house was smothered in gloom now, as well as in riotous green. The careful pruning fingers were at rest.

It was not quite eight o'clock one evening, some two weeks after the funeral, when, leaving my moonlit porch, I strolled down to the little wicket gate and went in.

I rang the worn bell, which rebounded with a metallic snap against the door and echoed dismally through the still rooms. Fritzie's sharp bark instantly responded, and never ceased; not even when the clumping step came out and uncertain fingers bunglingly lifted the bolts. He kept up the din while Mrs. Brahm stood in her short gown and petticoat, the moonbeams pouring their cool radiance upon her heavy features.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" I hastened to say. "I had no idea you were gone to bed, Mrs. Brahm. I feared you might be lonely, so I came down. Pray don't disturb yourself—good-night."

"I vas not feeling vell," she said. "Hush up, Fritzie! I thought I vould lay down—shust to rest me, you know—I could not shleep. I vas very silly," and she tried to laugh a little. "I heer de violin all de nights!"

Oh, poor heart-broken "auld wife!" She was now realising her loss. I could well believe she heard the wail of the silent strings, so interwoven with the long summer evenings under the despoiled lattice. I hurried away, and afterwards tossed on my pillow with thoughts of the deserted creature in that cruelly silent house, all alone.

I went again and again. She was gradually losing her morbid loquacity, so I encouraged her to talk. Her mind was full of plans. It worked slowly, but grief and solitude were goading her to the extent of her powers. She would remain in this country, she said, for three months, and then she would go back to the "Fatherland." Her husband's property amounted to ten thousand pounds. She would give nothing away till she died; then she would leave some to her sister and the bulk to her niece. She would not buy much till she reached Germany.

Smoothing her rusty, black cloak of a pattern of long ago, and thereby scattering some of the few aspiring beads left on its worn surface, she told with childish pleasure how she would buy her mourning in Germany, where it would be so cheap. Three months a widow, yet her lifelong apprenticeship of saving had put off the mourning outfit till she could get it cheap!

She said good-bye, and thanking me again for the small attentions I had rendered, said she would have a letter written to me on her arrival.

A few days later she went away. The old house came to show signs of life, if not altogether cheerful; but it could never be the same to the passers-by.

Six weeks afterwards, as I approached the old Kaiser's house at dusk, I was surprised to see a waggon in front of it, and a cluster of men, women, servants, and children about the gates. The men were slowly lifting something out. A thrill went through me as though a coffin were being handled, and I involuntarily paused. Gathering courage, I quickened my step, and arrived in time to see Mrs. Brahm seated in a chair which was being carefully conveyed up the steps by Schmitzer and another man. Amazed and in genuine concern, I followed, and inquired what it meant. The *Frau* could tell nothing, but lay with her eyes closed on the little bed upstairs, where the old violin had startled her sad memories that day. Nor did the others know, except that she had telegraphed Schmitzer the day before to meet her at the station.

The people in the house gathered wonderingly round and tenderly disrobed her. She could give no account of herself and was deaf to Fritzie's appeals.

During the night she revived somewhat, and they gathered from her mutterings that she had had a fall the day before the ship sailed and strained herself too severely to proceed on her voyage. Where she had been or what she had done all these weeks she was not able to tell.

The next morning a physician was called. He said she was suffering from pneumonia with cerebral complication. At noon, under powerful stimulants, she rallied, and the physician coaxed her to talk. He told her she was very ill.

"Will I get well?" she asked in an indifferent tone, but in good English, such as she was not wont to use.

"I can't say, Mrs. Brahm. If you have not made your will, I would advise you to do so at once."

At the magic word she half arose on her elbow and almost shrieked in tones that told of long-repressed anguish:

"Mein vill is made! My niece Gretchen—she vill git my monies," and falling back, she babbled on into incoherency.

She lay unconscious almost all the time. On the fourth evening an idea struck me.

"Where is the violin?" I suddenly inquired.

They did not know, but taking a bunch of keys from Mrs. Brahm's travelling-bag, we opened her trunk and soon came to what we sought. Lifting the box reverently, I opened it and, tightening the jangled strings, I softly drew the bow with its stiff, scraping cadence across them. The sound was not music, but it called back the fleeting senses to the world of real things

Fritzie started up to a sitting posture, and with ears erect and forehead wrinkled, gazed with glistening eyes, and gave a succession of mournful howls. The old *Frau* stirred uneasily, and arousing with an effort, looked fixedly at the instrument. Then she began muttering, while the colour came and went, and her breathing fell in gasps.

"Mien Villem," she murmured, then at intervals more words, among which I could distinguish "Faderland," "monies," "Gretchen," and "mein vill."

She never spoke again. As the last streaks of the wintry sun crept through the tiny window panes, she ceased to breathe.

We buried her beside her Villem. Three days later the little dog, to whom her coming back had been a reviving of sorrow, was missed, and the sexton of the dead city found him stretched out, stark and still, upon the frozen mound. There he buried him.

Eugenia Potts.

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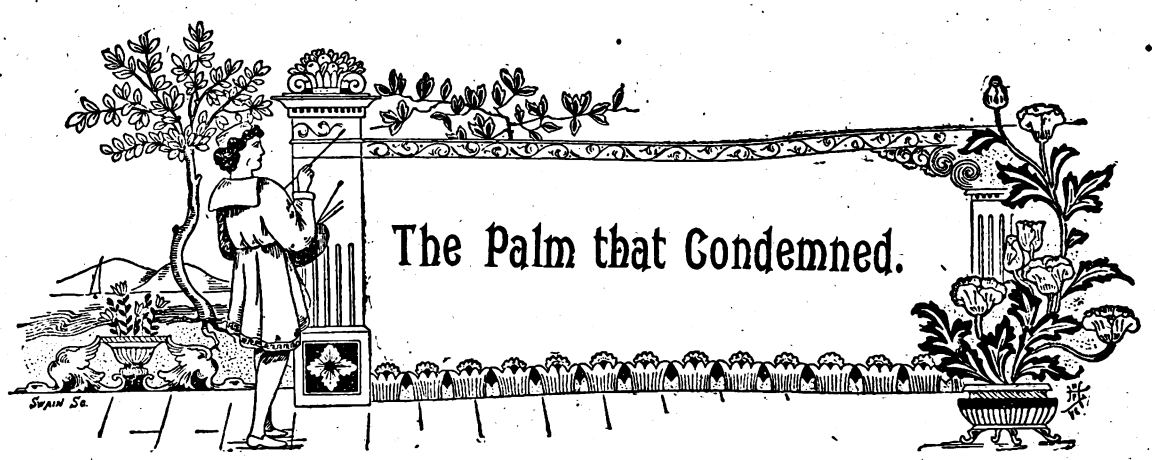

The Palm that Condemned.

I was visiting my friend Grace Lawrence at her father's home in a large city in the north, a beautiful old house shaded by noble old elms. Early one morning Grace burst into my room like a wild thing. Her hair was dishevelled and she was sobbing violently. I had just finished dressing and exclaimed quickly:

"Why, Grace, what is the matter?"

"Papa is dead, Eleanor—murdered!" she cried.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Who has done it?"

"I do not know. They will not let me in."

I ran out to Mr. Lawrence's room. The door was open, and the bed had not been slept in. The servants were gathered in the hall below, and the neighbours were rushing in, as they always do at such times.

I went quickly downstairs and to the library door, which was open, and there I saw the most ghastly spectacle that ever met my vision. Mr. Lawrence, the kind father of my dearest friend, a man universally beloved and respected, and chairman of the National Bank of the City, had been foully murdered. He was sitting in his chair by the library table and had been reading one of the reviews, which still lay open on the table before him.

A deep gash in the back of the head and another in the neck, separating the jugular vein, told the story. Some miscreant had crept in through the open window and attacked him from behind. It was Mr. Lawrence's habit to read after the rest of the family had retired for the night, often sitting up until midnight for the purpose. The night had been a warm one, and evidently the cruel deed was done while we were all sleeping calmly in our rooms above.

While we stood there the officers of the law arrived, and took charge of the body. They at once ordered all of us out of the room and closed the doors; but before I went, I noticed the bloody print of a hand on the side of the window casing. When I was allowed to go into the room again it was afternoon. I went at once to examine the hand print.

You ask me why?

For some months I had been studying the science of palmistry. I had taken it up at first only from idle curiosity. Then becoming convinced that there was something in this science more than I had been taught to believe, I procured some books, and had become quite expert in reading the lines of the palm. In some instances I had surprised my friends, and even myself, by the accuracy with which I read the past and foretold the future of my friends, upon whom I practised the art at every opportunity.

When I had finished looking at this print, which the officers had given orders should not be washed off at present, I went upstairs and got my amateur photographic outfit and took a photo of the lines, for the imprint was that of the full palm and fingers, with all the main lines distinct.

What I saw there would have convinced me, had I not known the dreadful secret of the library. This imprint, I say, would have convinced me that it was the hand of a murderer. The head, heart, and life line met almost under the mount of Saturn, and there were other indications of a murderous tendency.

I knew that officers and detectives would examine these blood stains, and I knew that experts would be called upon to bear witness in regard to them. I think it was only my interest in the study of palmistry that led me to transcribe the picture of that tell-tale hand. I little dreamt how closely it was to connect me with the unfolding of the mystery of the Lawrence murder case.

Poor Grace was so upset by the events of that night that I had all I could do to keep her from nervous prostration. She was an only daughter, and her mother had died five years before. She had been housekeeper, companion, and all in all to her father since leaving school, and he had idolised her. How she was to live without him, how she was to bear up under the fearful ordeal which faced her, was more than any of us could tell.

The funeral at last took place and the body was buried.

Much against her will we had overpowered the desire of Grace to remain at home, to which she seemed to cling with a morbid affection, and persuaded her to come with me to a summer resort on the coast.

It was the night before we were to start. Detectives had been busy on the case, and officers had scoured the country for some clue to Mr. Lawrence's murderer. No one had been more actively willing to help us in every possible way than Herbert Sheldon, the young cashier of the bank, a personal friend of Mr. Lawrence.

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He had gone into the bank when he was a young lad as errand boy, having been the son of a friend of Mr. Lawrence's youth, who had died in destitute circumstances. The boy had risen rapidly. He had for several years been first assistant cashier, and then cashier of the bank. He was proud of saying that he was the youngest cashier in England.

For several months he had evinced a great liking for Grace's company and had even asked her for her hand, but Grace had not returned his admiration and had given him no encouragement. Now, however, he had come forward and been like a brother in his suggestions and watchful care of the household. He seemed to feel Mr. Lawrence's death very deeply, and could not endure any mention of him, saying several times that since matters were as they were and that none of us were able to control our grief it seemed best not to talk about it, but to try and forget it. This to me, not to Grace.

As I said, it was the evening before we were to start for the seaside. Mr. Horton, who was really a private detective at work on the case, although no one in the village but Grace and myself knew this, had called for a private talk and to ask us a few questions.

Suddenly Mr. Sheldon was announced. He came in, and contrary to his usual custom, he held out his hand willingly to Grace.

The light from the piano lamp, under which she stood, struck his open palm in such a manner that I, who happened to be standing opposite her, saw there plainly written the evidence of guilt. I knew that Herbert Sheldon could be a murderer.

Then a thought came to me with a sudden shock. For an instant I could not speak. No suspicion of such a thing had entered my mind. What could have been his object?

I sat down, allowing the others to carry on the conversation for a few moments; then the desire to read that hand more fully took possession of me. I resolved to do it.

Fortune favoured me. A little "Guide to Palmistry," which had been such a help to me in my studies, happened to lie on the table. Mr. Horton, seeing it, picked it up and said:

"Hallo! who studies palmistry here?"

"Eleanor does," said Grace; "she can read your hand like an open book. Let her try."

"All right," said Mr. Horton. "I am sure I would like to know my destiny. Wouldn't you, Sheldon?"

Herbert Sheldon laughed lightly. "Well, yes, if any young lady can tell anything from my hand, here it is." And he held out his open palm, which I so much desired to see.

For a moment I studied it in silence. It was the exact palm of that tell-tale hand on the window-casing!

I stumbled through some sort of a description which should not in any way compromise my sudden knowledge. My wit told me that if I said anything now it would put him on his guard.

Mr. Horton had not intended to stay long when he came; this I knew. My thoughts were busy, however, and I soon formed a plan. I pretended that I wanted to show him a book, so went into the library and wrote on a slip of paper:

"Wait here until Herbert Sheldon goes. I have something to tell you."

I slipped this into a book, and, carrying it back, handed it to Mr. Horton in such a way that he noticed the note and kept it concealed. He didn't even look at me, and at first I did not know whether he had noticed it; but he stayed on and on, and finally at ten o'clock Herbert Sheldon took his departure.

When he had gone, I said to Grace:

"My dear, I have something which I must tell Mr. Horton. I am afraid you cannot bear to hear it, and perhaps you had better go upstairs."

She went out of the room without a word, and I turned to the detective.

"Mr. Horton," I said, "have you ever suspected Herbert Sheldon?"

"Don't put me on the rack," he answered, smiling. "It is my business to ask questions, not to answer them. Tell me what you think."

"Herbert Sheldon's hand," I said, "is the exact counterpart of the imprint on the window casing in the library."

He started as though he had been shot.

"Heavens!" he said. "Is it possible? What proof have you?"

"I photographed that hand exactly on the day of the murder. I have the print of it upstairs."

"Why did you never tell me of this before?" he said.

"I do not know," I answered. "I only did it in the interest of science—that is, the science of palmistry."

I went upstairs and got the print. Mr. Horton looked at it carefully, and asked if he might keep it, and if I had the negative. I said yes to both questions. Then he inquired as to the previous relations of Mr. Sheldon and the Lawrence family. When I had finished, he said simply:

"Say nothing, even to Miss Lawrence. I believe we have the real clue to the murderer, but I can say no more. Keep your own counsel, and I will work it up. If I need you, I will see or send for you."

Grace didn't ask any questions as to my business with Mr. Horton, nor did we ever speak of it again. We left for the seaside early the next morning. Four weeks afterwards I received the following telegram:

"We have our man. Herbert Sheldon was arrested this morning. Has confessed."

The telegram was signed by Mr. Horton. Following up the clue of the tell-tale hand, his first step had been to have the books at the bank examined by an expert A deficiency of about two thousand pounds was found, Sheldon's peculations extending back for two years. He had been seen also in excited conversation with Mr. Lawrence in his private room at the bank on the day before the murder, and had left him pale and very much out of temper at four o'clock in the afternoon.

When he was arrested and confronted with the evidences of his guilt, he broke down and confessed all.

The letter finished as follows:

"It is all as plain as day now. But I doubt if we had ever unearthed the mystery if you had not studied palmistry and photographed that tell-tale hand."

Helen Winslow.

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A MOTHER'S LOVE.

The flaming light of the sunset had long paled on the sky, and a thick wall of clouds had effaced the last ray of departing light on the horizon. Night was descending to the earth, spreading herself to the little village, and the lonely cottage at the end of it. The dark shadows crept in at the low windows, covering the ceiling, the corners, the cupboard, and the table, and only the large eyes of a purring cat, which sat comfortably on the bench near an old woman who was knitting, shone in the darkness. It was quiet in the little room, save for the untiring, monotonous clicking of the needle, the unceasing tic-tac of the clock. Now, with a whizzing sound, the clock began to strike, and its clear tones rang through the dark room.

"Eight! Now it is night; he will soon be here."

A sigh of relief left the old woman's breast. She laid aside her knitting, rose, and lighted a smoky oil lamp. Then she sat down again on the bench near the stove. The needles clicked on, the white-haired head sank on her breast, and she thought of the past.

Two years and a half ago! It was autumn. She was sitting on the same bench, waiting for her only son, who had been dismissed from the army service, to return. But he came not. The night passed, another day came, and again it was night. He came not.

"He will come to-morrow," she said each day; but the morrow dawned, and still he was absent.

Thus a week passed. Then the old letter-carrier passed her cottage.

"A letter, mother, from the only one!" he cheerily called.

He knew the stiff, awkward writing. Then he had hurried away, and "mother" had put on the horn spectacles—an old family piece, with large round glasses—stepped to the window in the full light of day, and opened the letter with trembling hands.

"Now I shall know," she thought.

She read the letter slowly! She had to spell it out word for word. The characters seemed fairly to dance on the white paper, and presently her eyes grew moist and the glasses became blinded.

"My Jano! my only son!" she moaned. Was he coming? Alas, no! The old woman sat down on the bench near the stove, clutched the letter nervously in both hands, and the tears, rolling over her wrinkled cheeks, fell upon the crumpled paper.

No, he was not coming! Perhaps he would never come! He was sitting in a close, dark cell; heavy, clattering chains fastened him to the wall. He was a criminal. He had killed a man in a scuffle. Now he would not come.

"Mother, I am innocent," he wrote, "I do not know how it happened."

The old woman only nodded her head. She knew how it happened. First the dismissal; then they drank and made merry. Her Jano was a gentle lad, but when men drink, what follows? She could picture the whole scene. Heads became heated, taunts flew hither and thither, one word provoked another, and then Jano's fist stirred, thrust itself upward—and the deed was done.

No, he did not return home. Two years and a half in prison! The old woman sat there, silent. Not a word of complaint passed her lips, not a tear shone in her eyes. She was thinking how she could avert some of the consequences of this calamity.

Suddenly she rose, put on a cheerful mien, forced a smile to her withered lips, and went to call on her relatives and friends. At every house she related, hesitatingly at first, then fluently, that her Jano, her only son, would not return home at present; he had become a sailor on a man-of-war, and was going on a cruise round the world. Her listeners were surprised at first; then they praised the courageous boy, and believed it all. The old woman thought she must choke with this, the first lie of her life. But no; upheld by her purpose, she told everybody without blushing or stammering, until the whole village knew the story.

"But what of Katha?" asked one. "She has waited long for Jano, and Peter, the miller's son, has been heard to say——"

"Ah! that false one! Let Katha beware of him!" quickly replied the old woman. "For the rest, she must be patient. Is not Jano winning money for them both? In truth, such a brave, handsome lad is worth waiting for."

She spoke with assurance; no one should know that in a fit of madness her Jano had fallen—that he was in prison. No—in that event he could never return to his village, to her, his mother, who loved him so. All the people would shun him like an outcast, would walk out of his way. The children would follow him, pelt him with stones, and call him "jail bird." Then, too, Katha, who loved him, who had remained true to him in spite of Peter's fierce wooing, who counted the hours until his return, when he would lead her to the altar—she would turn from him in disgust. No, not a soul should know of it.

And the old woman smiled, was friendly to everyone, and at the same time Death dwelt in her heart. At night, when all the villagers were sleeping, she knelt before the crucifix, and wept and prayed to God that He might spare her boy in prison.

One thing still worried her. Jano must return with good clothing, must bring back money from the long trip! And so she began to save, put penny after penny away. She liked sweetened coffee very much, but now she drank it bitter, and bought no more sugar. Penny after penny! Then she spent half the night in knitting for a city firm. But no one should know it. No, indeed! She stole away from the village, and came back secretly, like a thief, week after week, summer and winter, in storm, rain, or snow.

So time passed—two years and a half. Now it was time for Jano's return—that very day she expected him.

The old woman rose, went to the cupboard, taking from it a package of warm woollen stockings, a knitted jacket, a new pair of boots, and a silk kerchief. She had saved all that. She spread out the things on the white scrubbed table. Then she stepped to the bed, and took from under the pillow a small bag of coarse linen. There was a clinking within it. She was

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radiant with smiles. Two hundred francs! Yes, it had accumulated in the course of time.

She placed bread, ham, sausage, and butter on the table, and gave a last loving glance at it all. Everything was ready; now Jano could come.

Again she sat down on the bench, but ceased knitting. She listened. Was that not the well-known footstep approaching? She heard it in the yard, coming into the house; it stopped in front of the door of the room. She jumped up, but stood as if rooted to the spot, looking breathlessly towards the door. It opened softly; a tall, well-built young man came in, and two dark eyes peered at her questioningly from out a pale face.

"Mother!" he whispered.

But she had already thrown out her arms.

"Jano!" came trembling from the white lips, and in a moment he lay at her breast, and held her in tight embrace.

He had returned, her Jano, her only son!

Yes, he was again at home, and remained there. The threatening spectre of prison punishment lay behind him, thanks to his mother's love. The villagers greeted the well-dressed young man in friendly fashion, shook hands with him, and were happy that he was again in their midst. The men of the tavern made room for him at their table, drank to his health, and he had to tell them of his travels round the world. He related all sorts of things, as he had read or heard other people tell them. They had no exact knowledge of such matters here.

Then he began to work in field and meadow, day after day, untiringly. As his mother said, Jano was a good lad, industrious, kind, and honest. His only fault had been a fondness for the cup at times; but the terrible lesson he had learnt had cured him of that for ever.

After work was over, when approaching night bade all labour cease, his betrothed came tripping over the fields, and then all three, mother, Katha, and he, sat in the garden and talked over the future, the wedding, and how happy they would then be! So Jano gradually lost a certain nervous expression which had at first been noticeable, and appeared as gay as ever.

He laughed and joked, and made his old mother's life happy and bright. She looked at him with pride and forgot the past, while to Jano the dreary years spent in prison seemed like a bad dream.

It was a warm summer day. The sun shot its vertical rays down upon the earth. Worn and weary, the flowers drooped their heads. The leaves on the trees looked wilted. Not a bird in the air, not an animal in field or meadow. All had fled from the piercing rays of the sun.

Jano came along the path which lay between the gardens. He wore no coat; a wide-brimmed straw hat shaded his face, and he carried a rake over his right shoulder. Thus he walked along cheerfully, not heeding the dust which whirled up in dense clouds at every step, and then remained suspended in the air, immovable.

Suddenly he halted. A man, stooping and crawling along, slowly approached him. He was bare-footed, wore torn linen trousers and a patched and greasy jacket, under which a soiled shirt was visible. A crushed felt hat covered his unkempt hair. His face was framed by a stubbly grey beard, and the wild eyes glanced about unsteadily and penetratingly.

The tramp halted when he espied Jano. He shielded his eyes with his hand in order to see better, whistled softly, and, with a few steps, was beside the young man.

"Look here," he said in a husky voice, distorting his face by a horrible grin, "isn't this my partner of number seven?"

Jano turned pale, made a step backwards, and looked at the tramp in horror. But the latter continued calmly:

"Well, you do not remember me, it seems. I'll help your memory. I am Long Jacob, your old room mate and friend."

"And what do you want here?" Jano stammered confused.

And the beggar laughed hoarsely to himself.

"What do I want here? I want money—nothing more!"

Jano took a few francs from his pocket and said:

"There, take these, but go away from here—do not beg in the village. Don't let anyone see you. Don't tell anyone you know me."

The ex-convict had seized the coins quickly; now he asked in a surly tone:

"You are ashamed of me, are you?"

Jano shook his head, looked about cautiously, and whispered in his ear:

"No, no. But the people in the village do not know that—that I was in gaol, and they shall not know it, either. I never drink now. I have reformed."

"Reformed!" The beggar shook his head gravely. "I would like to reform too, but people will not let me; and beside, I suppose I have grown too old. Well, I won't betray you, Jano. Why should I? You were always a good fellow to me and were more sinned against than sinning. Never fear; I am going now, and in five minutes I'll be outside of the village. You may believe me, and I'll give you my word for it. I have a bit of honour left in me, too! A tramp's honour!"

Again he laughed low and mockingly, nodded to Jano, grinning, and dragged himself slowly on.

The young man stood watching him until he disappeared round a corner, and then looked about him anxiously. Far and wide nothing stirred—no one was to be seen.

"I am still safe," he muttered.

With a sigh of relief he went quickly towards his cottage. The threatening storm seemed to have passed by him fortunately once more.

But he had hardly left the scene of the interview when a stalwart young peasant emerged from behind a dense shrub in a neighbouring garden, leapt over the low fence, and ran quickly in the direction in which the beggar disappeared.

"Ah! ah! my fine fellow, we shall see!" he exultantly cried.

It was Peter, the miller's son.

The old tramp had really intended to leave the village, but as he walked down the road and neared an inn, he suddenly stood still, undecided as to what he should do. He shook his head, and walked on hesitatingly; then he again stood still, turned round, and came back slowly, muttering to himself:

"Well, I suppose I can take a little wine; I won't have to say anything because of that."

Presently he sat in a dingy corner of the low tavern with the third glass of wine standing before him. Ah, how the taste revived him! The stuff was good, and the cool room was agreeable to sit in, in spite of the innkeeper looking at him sideways distrustfully.

"Oh, I will pay! I have money!" he cried.

He put his hand into his pocket, brought out a franc and threw it on the table.

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"Give me another glass of wine."

The innkeeper came up promptly, seized the franc, and soon brought the liquor and some small change. At the same moment another guest came in at the door. It was the young peasant. When he espied the tramp in the corner he approached him, slapped him on the shoulder, and cried:

"Good morrow, good friend. I have but now come from Jano. You know him—are relative to him, perhaps?"

The tramp, half intoxicated, looked up in surprise and muttered, swinging his heavy head to and fro:

"Not that I know. He! he! Related!"

He laughed, seized the full glass and emptied it at one draught.

Peter beckoned to the innkeeper, and then continued:

"Well, I presume then that you are not. But drink on; I'll pay for it, and these"—he held out two bright francs—"shall be yours, if you'll tell me what you know about Jano."

The tramp shook his head, but reached for the full glass.

"Oh, I guess not! I guess not!" he chuckled. "Shall I betray Jano—such a good fellow! No, no, I won't do that! Have some honour left in me!"

Peter shrugged his shoulders, produced another two francs, and pushed all four close to the convict.

"These, they are yours—and now tell me quickly what you know; I have no time to spare."

The tramp gazed at the coins avariciously.

"Four francs!" he murmured, "four francs! I have given my word—but four francs! And it is nothing very bad." He turned to Peter. "You needn't tell anybody about it—for—well, yes."

With a hasty motion he secured the money and said:

"In a scuffle Jano knocked his opponent lifeless, and so had to spend a few months in gaol. It was done in self defence. There is nothing more—nothing more."

He muttered something incomprehensible, but Peter had already left the tavern. He stood out in the street, clutched his fists, and hissed through his teeth:

"At last, Jano, at last! Now Katha will be mine!"

* * * * *

It was evening. In the far west the sun descended to the horizon, and sank in a sea of flame. Laughing girls with the rake over their shoulder, and sober peasants, with smoking pipes in mouth, returned from the field, and all seemed refreshed by the fine, cool evening.

Jano came along a grassy path. He looked very handsome, with his glossy hair and bright eyes, and a smile of contentment played round his lips. Presently he reached the cottage where his Katha lived with her mother. The door stood open, but he went by it, passed round the house, opened a small gate, and entered a large orchard and vegetable garden.

Over yonder, on a wooden bench, sat the girl he was looking for. Her back was towards him. As he stood behind her, calling to her, she turned round as if frightened, and Jano, much astonished, looked into a pale and tear-stained face.

"Katha!" He bent over the girl and touched her shoulder. "You have been crying. Why? What has happened?"

She did not answer, but buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Katha, tell me what is the matter; what ails you?"

Then she drew her hands away from her face, looked at him steadily, and although she trembled, yet without faltering the words came from her lips:

"Jano, I beseech you, by our love, tell me the truth; is it true that you did not sail round the world, but you were—in prison?"

He looked at her in dismay; his face had turned deathly pale, and he had to lean against a tree to prevent himself from falling.

"Katha, who—who told you that?" he stammered.

She did not heed his question, but stepping nearer to him repeated:

"Tell me, Jano, is it true?"

It never occurred to the young man to deny the charge. He was above the sin of deliberate falsehood. His head sank, and in a dull, scarcely audible tone, he said:

"Yes."

She answered nothing. Silently she turned from him, drew the little narrow gold band from her finger, placed it on the bench and went slowly towards the house.

"Katha!"

The cry was heart-rending, but she did not turn back once, and disappeared into the house.

Jano stood leaning against the tree for a long, long time. Not a word passed his lips, nor did he revile the drunken man who had betrayed him; his only thought was his mother.

"Poor mother! You worked, suffered, and endured hunger in vain. Your son is a convict! The people will shout it loudly into your ears, and in your old age you will reap mockery and taunts. Poor mother!"

Night had come. Silver stars sparkled in the sky; a cricket chirped in the corn field; the frogs were croaking over in yonder marsh; the rushing of the river close by sounded dull. Suddenly there was a piercing scream. It came from a great distance. Was it the cry of some animal?

At early dawn next morning a group of men moved along the village street. Two of them carried a bier covered with a cloth, and behind them walked the miller and the village squire.

"Yes, it was this way." The miller was just concluding a long speech. "When the people called me they had already found Jano. How he fell into the river I do not know."

"H'm! Neither do I," the squire remarked.

"I am sorry for his poor old mother," continued the miller. "She has hardly had Jano back after so long an absence when she must lose him in this terrible way."

"Yes, I pity the poor woman," the squire said.

They had by this time reached their destination.

"Wait out here," the squire ordered the two bearers, and then he entered the cottage with his companion.

They walked through the dark hall into the one room. It was dim here. But the sun was rising, colouring the sky a fiery red, and the reflection shone through the little windows, skimming over a white scrubbed table, upon which lay an open Bible, and the old woman, who sat upon a chair with her hands folded. The white-haired head was inclined slightly forward, her face pale; a peacefully quiet smile played about her white lips, and the wide opened eyes stared fixedly.

Both men cast one glance only at the woman apparently asleep; then they doffed their caps, folded their hands, and murmured a prayer for her who had so peacefully passed out of life.

Yes! God had spared her the worst. Jano's mother was dead.

François Surl.

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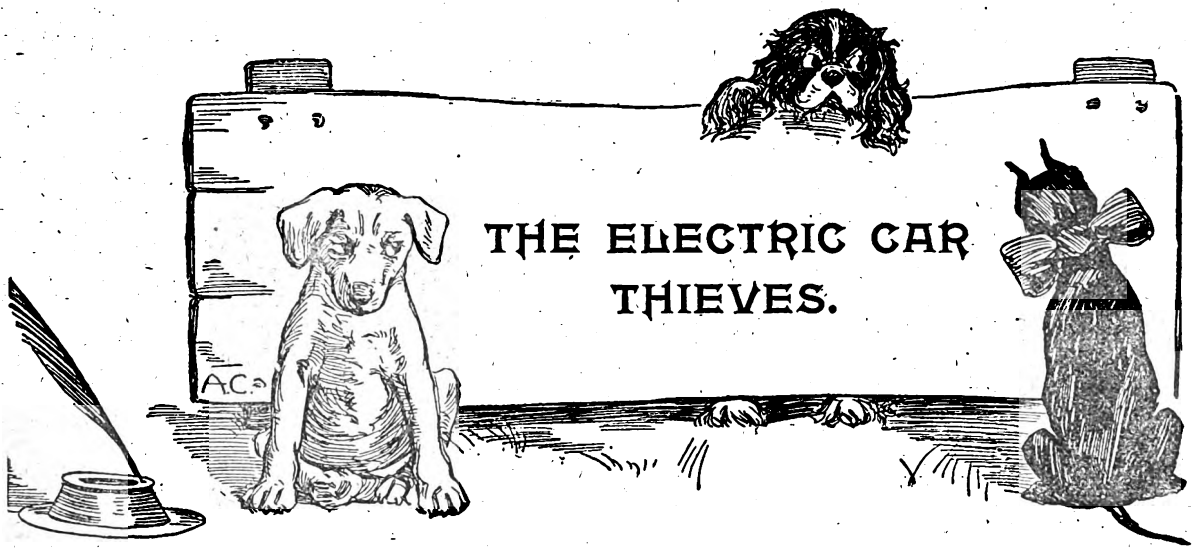

THE ELECTRIC CAR THIEVES.

"I BELIEVE my reputation as a detective began while I was in Germany," said the inspector in reply to my inquiry. "I was brought up in Berlin, and I joined the detective force in that city. I'll tell you about my first real success.

"It was just after the electric trams had started in—— well, I won't mention the place, as it might offend some of my friends over there.

"It seems that the authorities of the city had had much trouble with pickpockets, and after failing to catch any of them, they had decided to send to Berlin for some unknown detective to work the lay. The chief detailed me, as the least known I presume, and two days later I was in the private office of the head of the city police, receiving instructions.

"'These robberies,' said he, 'are evidently the work of some persons well up in their profession. Why, to tell you the truth, my own men have had their pockets relieved and known nothing of it until they came in to make their report that no suspicious characters were on the street. Think of it! Much of the trouble has been on the tramcars—the electrics—and although I have had at least two men on that service for more than a month, the complaints have continued just the same.'

"I told him it was necessary that my arrival should be kept a profound secret.

"'Without that,' said I, 'I shall be of no more use than your own men, for I do not think that I am any smarter. They have failed, doubtless, because the thieves know them, and avoid them. If they learn that I am here, and come to know me, I might as well go back home.'

"This little flattery did the chief good, and he agreed at once that no one should know of my presence, he being the only one of the force that was aware of it yet.

"With this arranged, I bade him 'good-morning,' and at once prepared my plan of campaign.

"I had brought a number of disguises with me, and, putting on one of these, I made a thorough examination of the city, rode on the cars, visited some of the saloons and beer gardens, and generally took in the town.

"When I had concluded, I was obliged to admit that I had seen nothing that gave me the slightest clue to my game, and that the work cut out for me was evidently of the most difficult.

"The second day I appeared as a farmer, clad in heavy, rough clothing, with muffler and mittens.

"In this style I rode on the cars of the electric line from one end of the city to the other; saw thousands of people, but not one that I could with safety call a 'crook.' The matter troubled me more and more every hour, and when, that night, I found my own pocket lighter in change, I was not only puzzled, but, as you may think, thoroughly angry.

"I would catch the clever thief, or make this city too hot to hold him, or them; and with that determination I began my third day's work.

"This time I filled my pockets with small change, and rode on the electric line again. For the complaints, strangely enough, were almost confined to that line.

"Upon examining my pockets in a quiet place after a long ride I missed some money. I was angry, so much so that I decided to rest for the remainder of the day.

"The morning following I was early at work, this time as a labourer, but money *sewn* into my pockets, so that any effort to extract it would come to my notice.

"The day was stormy, and riding uncomfortable because of the crowds. It was bad, too, for my plans, but I kept at it without the slightest sign of any luck.

"As I left a car about twelve o'clock and turned toward a coffee-shop to find a lunch, I was followed by the conductor, bent on the same errand.

"As we entered the restaurant together, he, remembering me on the car, spoke of the weather, and how bad it was for traffic.

"I replied, and we sat down at the same table.

"After some general conversation he said with a laugh:

"'Did you see that fellow get a shock this morning? He got his heel against the heater, and as his other foot was on the metal mat on the floor, and wet with snow, he got quite a dose. He jumped as if he had been shot!'

"'How's that?' said I. 'Do I understand that it is possible to get a shock on your cars? I thought the claim was made that they are perfectly safe?'

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"'Oh, they're safe enough,' he replied; 'but, you see, the heater that stands against the seats behind your legs is full of electricity. Of course, it won't hurt you simply to touch it; but if your feet are all snow and on the metal mat when you touch it, you will get a shock. I've often laughed to see women jump.'

"After I had eaten my lunch I returned to my watch, but no results followed. Then I went to my room and proceeded to think. When I retired that night I had evolved a plan that I believed would result in the capture of my quarry.

"The next morning was bright and pleasant, and soon after nine o'clock I was again on the cars, this time as a retired soldier—that is, I had an empty sleeve, my arm being hidden under my buttoned coat, and in general was military in manner and appearance. But there was one thing that did not pertain to my disguise, and it was this: in each pocket of my trousers I carried a long key-chain of steel, which, if allowed to dangle, would reach quite to the floor. How I proposed to work it will appear later.

"Before entering a car, I took pains to cover my feet with snow to such an extent that I could knock off enough on the floor to wet the shoesoles of anyone sitting next me. Then I chose a seat near the little heaters that stood against the sides, and fell into a doze.

"I would ride sometimes a mile, and sometimes further, then change cars, avoiding any appearance on the same car twice. The fine day was in my favour, for many people were without rubber-soled shoes, and therefore the more likely to feel the shock if they meddled with my pockets.

"Although seemingly half asleep, I can assure you that I watched carefully the parties who seated themselves near me, and if a suspicious-looking one appeared, I would allow the steel chain to dangle down to the floor until it touched the heater, then with the wet snow on the metal mat about the feet of my neighbour, do you not see that any hand coming in contact with the coins, which were in the same pocket as the remainder of the chain, would necessarily receive a sharp shock?

"I had passed two hours or more, riding a number of miles and watching a number of persons, but no one had yet appeared who seemed to me at all suspicious.

"At last, just as I entered a car and knocked a fresh lot of snow on to the mat at the side of the seat I desired, two men came into it, both of whom looked to me like 'crooks.'

"I was on the alert at once, and as they stepped in, I was about to move so that one of them might seat himself near me, when two ladies also entered, both well dressed, and evidently women of fashion, and the men paused and permitted them to take seats first.

"One of them placed herself close to me, and I looked as if I were going to change my position.

"The chain was hanging as I have described, for I had arranged it as the men entered, and I was mentally reviling my ill luck, paying no attention to my business at all, when a shriek rang through the car, I felt a hand struggling in my pocket, and almost mechanically I seized it.

"In an instant the car was in an uproar, for I had gripped the fair wrist of one of the fashionables who had seated herself by my side—and worse, within her closed hand she held some of my money and a bit of my key-chain. The clever pickpockets were women.

"Recovering my self-possession as soon as possible, I smilingly apologised to the lady for the condition of affairs, but retained my hold of her hand and insisted upon her accompanying me to the police-station.

"At first she objected, and her companion joined with her in refusing, but I quickly showed my authority for arresting them.

"A sudden hush fell upon those in the car, and as my prisoners began weeping, I said:

"'Ladies and gentlemen,—I am not a resident of this city, but have been called here to discover certain unknown thieves who have picked your pockets for the past few months. I am pleased to announce that I have been successful, and that the electric cars will be safe for travel after my friends here have found a new lodging.'"

Margie K.

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LAST WRITTEN, ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ FIRST READ.

MINER wishes to know if it is true that the Mint authorities will coin a man's own metal for him.————If you refer to gold, it is perfectly true, but they will not coin your silver for you. The Mint buys its own silver and makes a very good profit on coining it.

L. D.—Quite right. In Scotland, at one time, capital punishment was by drowning.

F. B. G.—There is no reason whatever why your wedding should not take place upon any day of the year your bride-to-be should fix upon. A couple of centuries ago it was quite a different matter, however. There were certain "close" seasons every year. From Septuagesima Sunday until Low Season, weddings were forbidden, also from Rogation Sunday to Trinity Sunday. At Advent marriages were once more discouraged, and it was not until January 13th following that weddings were again permitted.

L. P. C. wants to know why soldiers carry canes in their hands.———— Probably to prevent them from slouching, as a good many civilians do; and they undoubtedly add smartness to the general appearance of Tommy Atkins.

NATURALIST.—To find the rarest bird in existence, you must go to the mountains between Annam and Laos, where there is a certain kind of pheasant. For many years its existence was known only by the fact that its longest and most splendid plume was in much request by mandarins for their headgear. A single skin is worth £80, and the bird living would be priceless, for it soon dies in captivity.

ATHLETE.—Indian wrestlers and athletes train on a diet consisting chiefly of milk, with a little goat's flesh and plenty of farinaceous food.

JACK asks: "Why do widows wear caps?"————The origin of the custom is extremely ancient. It may be traced back to the Egyptian and and Grecian practice of shaving off the hair in periods of mourning. But as without hair there was a danger of catching cold, the men wore wigs upon their bald crowns, and the women caps. The custom was continued by the Romans for some time, but after it was partially abandoned, the women still concealed their hair.

N. P.—The reason popular tales are not put into writing amongst the Mohammedans is that the reading of romances is forbidden in the Koran; they are therefore passed from one story-teller to another.

SOCIALIST.—The share of land that would fall to each inhabitant of the globe were it equally divided would be about twenty-three and a half acres.

J. C.—Yes, it was stated by an electrical expert only about twelve years ago, when giving evidence before a Parliamentary Committee, that he did believe that the telephone would come into very general use in this country. He probably admits his mistake now. The telephone would be far more extensively used than it is, were the service as efficient as it ought to be and the rates less exorbitant; but while the annual fee is so high, and the instrument retains the character it seems to have acquired as a machine for the generation of bad language, its use will be restricted.

D. G.—The costliest fur is that of the sea otter. A single skin of this animal will fetch as much as £200.

E. B.—As regards its main origin, English is certainly a Low German language, while modern German is a High German tongue. This does not, however, imply any inferiority in the origin of our speech, as you seem to imagine. Low German was spoken by the inhabitants of the low-lying coastland whence our Saxon ancestors came, and High German by the inhabitants of the higher interior country.

DUBIOUS writes: "If a man finds a letter lying in the road, stamped and addressed, what should he do with it?"————The most sensible thing would be for him to post it in the nearest pillar box. If, however, he did not care to take the responsibility of posting it, he had better hand it to the first policeman he meets.

S. C.—If kept continuously running, a watch will tick 160,144,000 times in a year.

STICKLER.—Your idea that only one who has lost both parents is, correctly speaking, an orphan, is quite wrong. The word "orphan" comes from the Greek, and merely means one bereft of either parent. The word was, therefore, used quite correctly in the phrase to which you take objection.

W. D.—There are many ways of proving that the human eye does not always see things as they are. For instance, if a column which supports an entablature is perfectly straight, it appears to lean outward, and it is therefore made to lean inward; the edges of roofs are raised slightly at the centre, as if made perfectly level they would appear to drop about the middle; corners are made to look square by being in reality a little broader-angled, and hundreds of other similar examples might be given.

WILLIAM B.—A single bee collects only about a teaspoonful of honey during a season.

ALICE G. has recently broken off her engagement, but she has not yet returned the ring. She writes to ask if this is necessary.————Of course it is. You should not have broken off the engagement in the first place without returning the ring at the same time. Under the circumstances it would be quite natural if your lover were to suppose that you were not serious, and merely regarded it as what is commonly known as a "lover's quarrel." Besides, to dismiss the man and keep his presents would be distinctly bad taste on your part.

S. W.—The first permanent military force in England was the King's Guard of Yeomen, established in 1486.

ALWAYS THE SAME writes to say that he cannot understand why people should be constantly changing the cut, shape, and general style of their clothes. To him it is nothing but a source of annoyance and inconvenience. "For instance," he writes, "twenty years ago I began to wear collars of a certain shape, but, no sooner had I got accustomed to it, than it was out of fashion. As it was extremely comfortable I have refused to wear any other style ever since, but have had to have them made specially for me."————————You ought to try and accommodate yourself to the varying moods of fashion, to a reasonable extent. Under the circumstances you ought to go to China. There a man may wear the same clothes for a lifetime without being out of style, so little does the fashion change.

O. H. asks: "Has a woman ever been Pope?"————There is a tradition to that effect, but it has been refuted over and over again. "Pope Joan," as she was called, was supposed to have lived in the eleventh century, and to have worn the tiara for the space of two years under the title of John VII.

W. S.—Your morning cup of coffee will give you a good idea of what kind of weather to expect. When the bubbles that collect on the top of the coffee form a frothy mass in the centre of the cup, you may rely upon fine weather; on the other hand, if it collects in a ring round the edge of the cup, you may expect rain.

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THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO. 188B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Road. 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

CYCLE DEPOTS

High-class Selection of GENTS', LADIES', & JUVENILE CYCLES. From £3 Cash, or on Easy Terms 10/- Monthly. Head Depot: 52 to 55 Blackfriars Road, London, S.E.

BEST IN LONDON. Lists Post Free.

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Practical Tuition Until Perfect, 10/6. Single Lesson, 2/-. PURCHASERS TAUGHT FREE. Open 9 till 9. West End Branch: 124 King's Road, Sloane Square, S.W.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps.

ALEX. ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London.

Opposite Bedford Row. (Est. 1850.)

Parcel free from observation

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates Free. Tobacconists Commencing. See Illustrated Guide (259 pages), 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. Tobacconists Outfitting Company, 186 Euston Road, London.

The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). Mgr., H. Myers.

THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

A BIG OFFER

£3 IN MONEY TO EACH PERSON £3

Purchasing a Box of Tablets, and who fills in the two lines of rhyme correctly as below. This exceptional offer is to advertise ARCHER'S DIGESTIVE TABLETS. All we ask in return is that purchasers will recommend them to all their friends; by so doing it will largely advertise our Firm, and help to rapidly build us up a large trade. Every box bears the Government Revenue Stamp.

DR. ARCHER.

ARCHER'S DIGESTIVE TABLETS.

Price 1/3 per box, post free.

The best and simplest of spring medicines.
Far better than noxious Pills and dangerous Drugs!

ARCHER'S marvellous little Tablets are made on the principle that most of the ordinary troubles of Indigestion are due to an over-acid condition of the secreting glands of the stomach. Any doctor will tell you this. Counteract this acidity, and Indigestion, with all its many unpleasant consequences—Biliousness, Pain in the Chest and Back, Flatulence, Sick Headache, Lassitude, Want of Appetite, Liver Disorders, Constipation, &c.—all disappear. This happy result is almost magically brought about by taking after meals one of ARCHER'S TABLETS.

In order to well introduce Archer's Tablets we make the following

SPLENDID OFFER.—Underneath are four lines of Rhyme; in the first two most of the letters are left out. We don't pretend it is good poetry, but it tells what our Tablets are, and what they can do. That is all we want.

TO EVERYONE who fills in the missing letters correctly, and sends them to us with a Postal Order and Stamps value 1/3 (for a box of Tablets), we promise to send £3.

A . . . . . 's D . . . . . e T . . . . . s H . . p T . D . . . . t T . . F . . d.
T . . . . . y C . . . . . e T . . S . . . . . m, S . . . . . n A . . S . . . . . n T . . B . . . d.

Sweet and pleasant in flavour they are liked by young and old,
Once tried, always taken: worth their weight in gold.

ARCHER'S DIGESTIVE TABLETS HELP TO DIGEST THE FOOD. THEY THOROUGHLY CLEANSE THE SYSTEM FROM ALL IMPURITIES, AND STRENGTHEN AND SWEETEN THE BLOOD.

DIRECTIONS.—Write the two lines filled in correctly on a sheet of paper, and send it with a Postal Order value 1/3 (for the tablets), and a stamped addressed envelope for results, to

ARCHER'S TABLET CO., 111 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, W.C.

Those availing themselves of this big offer must send their orders for Tablets soon as possible, as it will close on April 14th, 1898. The results and Prizes will be posted to all on April 25th. The Tablets will be sent soon after the order is received as possible. Write your name and address on the envelope very plain. (This offer applies to the United Kingdom only.) *Mention the name of this paper.*

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

MAKE FRUIT WINES AT HOME.

Ask for MASON'S.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. THE VERY BEST

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE.

A Sixpenny Bottle will, in six minutes, make sixty glasses of Delicious, Non-Alcoholic Wine. Agents Wanted.

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger Lemon, Orange, Blackberry etc.

YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

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1898 PROCLAMATION.

"OH, YES! REVENUES FROM ECONOMY ARE ENORMOUS."

THE RICHEST PROVISION in **KNOWLEDGE** made **ABSOLUTELY EASY** for the **ACCUMULATION** of this **INCOME.** Write to Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son, Carpet Manufacturers, of the City of Leeds, who will provide you with full information, posting you **free** (if, when writing, you mention this paper) a large, amazingly interesting, valuable, instructive, and detailed illustrated "Spring" Reduction Catalogue, showing you what you can save, what to buy, and where to buy Carpets, Mats, and Hearthrugs of every manufacture, including Wilton, Plush, Brussels Velvet, Antique, Foreign, and Furs, also **QUEEN'S ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, PRUDENTIAL, ECLIPSE,** and **ALARM CARPETS** and **HEARTHRUGS** (Regd.). Also Blankets, Curtains, Sheetings, etc., and a thousand other articles wanted in every household. (Copyright.)

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household

Sale Price. **2/-** **HEARTHRUGS** Regd. *Sale Price.* **2/-**

In Reversible Rich Turkey patterns, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft wide. These Hearthrugs have gained a world-wide reputation for Magnificence, Cheapness, and Utility, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of *repeat orders* and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 for 5/9, 6 for 11/3, 12 for 22/-.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

TRADE MARK ON ALL GOODS. **CARPETS** (REGD.) BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD. Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.
6ft. by 9ft. 7/6	9ft. by 9ft. 11/-	10½ft. by 12ft. 18/-	12ft. by 15ft. 25/6
8ft. by 9ft. 9/-	9ft. by 10½ft. 13/6	12ft. by 12ft. 21/-	12ft. by 18ft. 30/-
6ft. by 12ft. 10/6	9ft. by 12ft. 15/-	9ft. by 15ft. 19/6	12ft. by 21ft. 35/6
	9ft. by 13½ft. 16/6	12ft. by 13½ft. 22/-	

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE *Sale Price.*

REAL BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS **5/6**

In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-.

"Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.

The Right Honourable The Viscountess Melville writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39/-, one ditto 60/6 to match them. Cheque £8 14s. inclosed."

Colossal Sale of

RICH VELVET PILE REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS.

Extraordinarily Heavy, very best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra-Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years, and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST.	4½ft. by 7ft. 11/-	VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	9ft. by 12ft. 38/-
	6ft. by 9ft. 18/-		11ft. by 12ft. 47/-
	7½ft. by 9ft. 23/-		12ft. by 13½ft. 59/-
	9ft. by 9ft. 28/-		12ft. by 16ft. 69/-
	9ft. by 10½ft. 33/-		12ft. by 18ft. 77/-

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any colour preferred.

GENUINE CARPETS

IMPORTANT REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a carpet for the money. Be this so or not, we send out no carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft.—even for **2/6.** Test them. They Will Surprise You. **A Sample "Alarm" Carpet, Reversible and Bordered. Guaranteed Genuine Bargains.** Large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room; if post free, 8d. extra.

Cheques and P.O.'s to **F. HODGSON & SON, LEEDS.**

REDUCED SALE PRICE 2/6

SPECIAL. Specially Reduced 1898.

INTRODUCTION SALE PARCEL

With FREE GIFT enclosed.

THE LOT **10/6**

CONSISTING OF

1 Magnificently Rich Cream-Coloured Curly Sheepskin HEARTHRUG, average size 6ft. by 3ft., perfection in quality.

1 Beautiful Reversible Art Crimson Plush BED RUG, SOFA COVER, OR TABLE COVER, double warp, very heavy, size 50in. by 78in.

2 Beautiful Silver Goatskin DOOR MATS, lined woollen cloth throughout, pinked edges, best finish, ornamental to any room.

1 Elegant HAIR BRUSH, highly finished, with mirror back.

"Given Away."

Providing "Short Stories" Coupon, 19/3/98, is quoted, a **FREE GIFT** will be enclosed—a very handsome Electro-Silver Plated "OWL" PEPPER STAND, with coloured eyes and gilt feet.

Cash returned if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. Hodgson & Son.

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE POST FREE.

We rely upon spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the Maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century. All Orders dispatched same day, in rotation, as they arrive by post. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates.

Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." CHEQUES AND P.O.'s PAYABLE TO

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

OUR NEW VENTURE.

Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the price of one! (Copyright.)

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE "PRUDENTIAL"

REVERSIBLE CARPETS (Regd.)

Reversible, woven throughout, with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in twelve sizes only. These Carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine on one side the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian, and on the reverse the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

When this Design is wanted in Hearthrug or Carpet as shown above, kindly quote Registered No. 203405.

	Reduced Sale Price			Reduced Sale Price	
6ft. by 9ft.		4s. 9d.	9ft. by 15ft.		12s 9d.
7½ft. by 9ft.		5s. 11d.	12ft. by 12ft.		12s. 9d.
9ft. by 9ft.		7s. 6d.	12ft. by 13½ft.		14s. 6d.
9ft. by 10½ft.		8s. 6d.	12ft. by 15ft.		15s. 9d.
9ft. by 12ft.		9s. 6d.	12ft. by 18ft.		19s. 6d.
10½ft. by 12ft.		11s. 6d.	12ft. by 21ft.		22s. 6d.

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., Aug. 3rd.—Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque enclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2yd long and 1yd. wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4/3, 6 for 8/-, or 12 for 15/6. Sterling Value

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 482. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 26TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

PHYSICIANS AND SCIENTISTS
REPORT THAT
FROMMS EXTRACT
IS
A PERFECT FOOD
FOR
INFANTS AND INVALIDS
AS WELL AS FOR THE
STRONG AND HEALTHY.
HALF THE PRICE OF MEAT EXTRACTS.

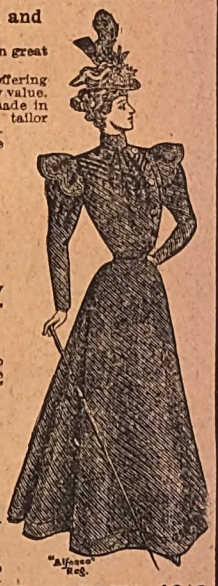
SOLD BY CHEMISTS AND GROCERS

10/6 ALLEN FOSTER & CO., 10/6
SOLE MAKERS OF THE
'Alfosco' Costumes

These marvellous Costumes are acknowledged throughout the world to be far SUPERIOR IN VALUE, STYLE, AND FINISH to any Costumes ever yet offered to the public at anything approaching the same prices.

Design No. 847.—Ten and Sixpence.
The Chesterfield Costume is in great demand this season.
ALLEN FOSTER & CO. are offering a special line of extraordinary value. This charming Costume is made in the **Specialite Serge**, tailor made, and well-finished. Full size skirt.
PRICE ONLY
10/6
SKIRT ONLY
5/6
or in the new **Venetian Cloth**, only
13/6
This Costume also looks well in the pretty **Edinboro' Tweed**, price
18/6
PATTERNS FREE.

Design No. 750 Ten and Sixpence.
This is a very smart "Alfosco" Costume made in the **Specialite Serge**. It has the new Russian Blouse Style of Bodice shaped to the figure at back. It has prettily designed epaulettes, and the bodice is trimmed with rows of flat braid and large buttons. The bodice and sleeves are lined; the skirt is cut full and well made. ALLEN FOSTER & CO. have great confidence in recommending this Costume. It never fails to give the utmost satisfaction.



Design No. 847. 10/6 Design No. 750. 10/6

THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS.

Costume Complete, 10/6. Skirt only, 5/6.

This Costume in our **New Venetian Cloth, 13/6.** It can also be ordered in our Edinboro' Tweed and Estémene, all wool serge. All particulars and **PATTERNS POST FREE.**

Regular Stock Sizes are 34, 36, and 38in. round bust (under arms); the Skirts being 38, 40, and 42in. long in front. Larger or Special Sizes made to measure, 1/6 ex. Each Costume securely packed and sent carr. paid, 6d. extra. Skirt only, 6d. extra.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO., The London Manufacturers,
17 ROSCOE ST., GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

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THE John Noble

COSTUME COMPLETE, **10/6** Skirt alone, **5/6**

HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Sent by Parcel Post, safely packed, to all parts of the globe, direct from the Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World, and universally admitted to be the

HIGHEST KNOWN VALUE FOR MONEY.

The Costumes on this page are made up in two good durable Cloths:

I. **John Noble Cheviot Serge**—weighty and weather-resisting.
II. **John Noble Costume Coating**—smooth-surfaced, and of lighter weight.

The latest Illustrated Fashion Book and

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE

to all who name *Short Stories*, and need not be returned.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH (6 yards, 52in. wide), of either of these two fabrics for 7/6. Carriage 8d.

COLOURS of all Costumes are: Black, Navy, Myrtle, Ruby, Cinnamon, Fawn, Sage Green, Reseda, Purple, and Grey.

THE THREE STOCK SIZES are 34, 36, 38in. round bust (under arms). Skirts being 38, 40, 42in. long in front. Any other size can be made to measure, 1/6 extra.

LADIES' OWN DESIGNS made up in any kind of fabric by skilled dressmakers at minimum cost. A Box of 1,000 Patterns of New Spring Dress Goods lent to select from, and sent carriage paid.

The New "Gordon" Costume. Model 894.—Well-cut Bodice, trimmed at centre with braid a l'Ecosse. Full wide tailor skirt. Price, **10/6** 10/6 complete. Safely packed and carriage paid 6d. extra. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d.

A Useful and Becoming Mode, Model 900.—A well-cut and finished Open Coat, and full wide Tailor Skirt. Price complete costume, **10/6**. Sent safely packed and carriage paid, 6d extra. Skirt alone for 5/6; carriage 5d.

MOURNING ORDERS

Executed and Sent off in Twelve Hours.

The "Kerry" Costume. Model 899.—A well-made and finished Bodice trimmed braid. The Skirt, full wide, drapes well. Price complete, **10/6** Safely packed and carriage paid, 6d. ex. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d.

Model 648.

This design still continues to meet with great approval. It consists of stylish Blouse Bodice and neat Skirt. The Bodice is lined through and made with prettily gathered front, new sleeves, and shaped belt, as sketch. Lengths 35 38 42 46 Prices 6/11 7/11 8/11 9/11 Carriage 6d.

FROM **6/11**

Eglinton Road Post Office,
Plumstead, Kent.

JOHN NOBLE.—DEAR SIR,—About ten years ago I was persuaded to give you a trial for dress material, which has been more than justified by the value received. *I have not since bought a single yard from anywhere else.* Your serge requires no recommendation from me, as it speaks for itself; in fact, if I were to tell you what it was doing now, you would scarcely credit it. The One Pound Bundle should receive attention from the mothers of families. I tried one last month. I have had made six girls' dresses, varying in ages from 8 to 15, two capes and two boys' suits. So you do not exaggerate when you say that they are worth double.

Believe me, yours truly, ALICE HARRIS.

40s. in the £.

JOHN NOBLE Ltd. have an unusually heavy accumulation of Dress

REMNANTS

and other Fabrics, all in good useful lengths, the very thing for large families, institutions, etc. These Remnants, all in perfect condition, will be sent out during the next few weeks in **£1 Bundles**, each to contain in addition, at least one superior Full Dress Length, fit for any lady's wear. The bundles are agreed to be worth 40/- and even more. Price, carriage paid,

£1 ONLY.

BANKERS:—
'LONDON & MIDLAND' BANK Ltd.

Please mention "Short Stories" when ordering.

THE JOHN NOBLE KNOCKABOUT FROCK FOR GIRLS.

"An ideal School or Holiday Garment for Girls."

Sizes—
21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42 inches long in front. Prices—1/6 2/- 2/6 3/- 3/6 4/- 4/6 5/- each. Carriage 4d. extra.

Warm Well-knitted WOOL CAPS supplied in all shades at 1/- each. Ladies' Tam o' Shanter Caps, well knitted, at the same price, 1/-

Model 895.—A smart, Tailor-made Suit. The Coat is well cut and fastens with one button. The Skirt is in the latest mode, and is full wide. Price, 15/- complete. Packed in leather-board box and carriage paid, 1/- extra.

JOHN NOBLE LTD., Brook Street Mills, MANCHESTER.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 482.] For the Week ending March 26th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

THE PRETTY PEARL AND THE CRAFTY COMMISSIONER

Told at Soong-Kong on the Banks of the Grand Canal, on the 6th day of the month called Mow.

IN the cool of a lovely evening in the middle of summer, Mr. and Mrs. Chun were sitting in the veranda of their charming villa in Se-chewen, enjoying the breeze which came off the river, and discussing the prospects of the lady Chao.

Chao, who by reason of her exquisite complexion and surpassing beauty had been named the Pearl, was the one fair daughter of the house of Chun, and the marriage agents had on their books quite a number of "eligibles" who had been casting "sheep's-eyes" in that direction; for in loveliness of form and purity of feature the lady Chao, it was reported, could give points even to the famous beauty Kin-leen.

Mr. Chun laid down the letter from the agent who represented Moo Kat, the eldest son of the chief Salt Commissioner, and remarked to his wife that the Salt Commissioner's son was "a very estimable young man."

"Hai-yah! Mr. Chun," said the lady. "And what, pray, do you know about arranging these affairs? A man who meddles in woman's matters always reminds me of the owl that tried to sing like a nightingale, but only succeeded in looking like a fool. While your mouth is filled with the praises of Moo Kat, you know so little of the Book of Rites yourself as not to be aware that it is the mother's province to arrange the marriage of her daughters."

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"Well, of course, my dear," said Chun, feeling somewhat abashed under the sharp attack of his wife, "if you have anyone in your eye ——"

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Chun," replied the lady smiling sarcastically. "But were I in your place, sir, I would yield gracefully. Moo Kat, indeed! If you were still as I found you, toiling at the desk or drudging in the warehouse—Moo Kat, who belongs, I allow, to the official class, might do well enough. But not to-day, thank you! We've cut the shop, sir; and set up our quarters in the delightful village of Everlasting Felicity, in a house dedicated to the Goddess of Connubial Happiness; and, I don't care an orange-pip, Mr. Chun, for all the Moo Kats between this and the great wall.

"It was a blessed day for you, my dear," the lady ran on, "when I was weak enough to accept your contemptible presents and allow the red cords to bind my 'lily feet' to your pair of pedal deformities. I should like my daughter to do better than her mother."

Chun, who had the mildest disposition in the world, merely rubbed his palms together and murmured: "I thank Heaven and the Three Pure Ones* continually for having given me such a woman."

His wife gave a scornful little laugh, and sniffed at the white roses which crept about the veranda.

"I'm very pleased, Chun," said she, "that you have sense enough to acknowledge that this is my affair—not yours. Now listen to me"—the poor man had been doing very little else but listen all the years of his wedded life—"here have you been going into the town to look at the papers every day for a week; and every day you've come back to me with the same silly tale, 'There's nothing in the papers to-day, wife.' Of course, I never did believe that you went to read the papers, and now I'm sure of it. But if there's one thing I hate it's domestic scenes. I do like peace at home; and to enjoy that, a wife soon learns that if her eyes and ears may be kept open, her mouth must be

* The Chinese Trinity.

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He hummed in the Prefect's ear.

kept shut. Now, sir, after this, don't tell me any more that you're going into town to 'look at the papers.' Oh! you husbands," she exclaimed, shaking her head at the long-suffering Chun, "you're all matrimonial frauds."

Poor old Chun stole a look at his wife which intimated plainly that she had travelled very far away from him.

"Then you really *haven't* heard?" screamed the lady, coming down on the unfortunate man with the suddenness of a typhoon in the Yellow Sea. "Has no man then, so much as mentioned the greatest piece of news which has been told in these parts since the days before the Flood! What, in the name of Confucius, I wonder, do you men find to talk about? Nothing of any consequence, that's certain. We poor women could give you a long start and a good beating. Why, the news only arrived at mid-day, by special express messenger from Peking, and Mrs. Weng was here with it an hour later. Ha! ha! Chun."

Now the village of Everlasting Felicity, in which the establishment dedicated to connubial happiness was situated, lay so far out of the world that the latest intelligence of the doings at the capital took four months and twenty days to reach there by the ordinary channels. Small wonder, then, that Chun should meekly attempt to draw his wife's attention to this not unimportant fact.

But the lady, beating her ivory-mounted fan against the enamelled porcelain table, cried:

"Listen, sir, listen! Pray am I not to be allowed a word? You know very well you're only trying to palm off a paltry pretence to excuse your unpardonable conduct. Oh! you're a clever man, Chun, but I'm too cute to be caught by limed twigs. Now, then, not another word, please, till I've done.

"An Imperial courier has arrived to-day with a proclamation that the Emperor Yang Te has commissioned his minister Ma-o to select from the marriageable maidens in the Empire of Han, ninety-five of the most beautiful girls he can discover, and send them up to Peking for his son Lo Yang to choose wives from.

"Now where, I should like to know, is he going to find a more ravishing creature than my Pearl? I say, tell me where, Mr. Chun. You cannot? Then you might have the grace to say so. The girl is matchless; in truth, she is more like a child of the gods than a daughter of men. Oh, you needn't pocket the compliment, Chun! Yes, Pearl is a stork among poultry. Her beauty eclipses that of the moon, and is enough to make the flowers turn green with envy.

"The minister is to arrive to-morrow, and the girls are to be at the *yamun* next day precisely at ten o'clock. The Prefect will be in attendance to see all's fair and no favour. Ninety-five are to be sent up; but only half-a-dozen will be chosen, and my Pearl's going to come out at the top. Now I must be off to see about the things she's to wear, and I shall expect you to do a father's part by the girl, Chun, and give her a handsome trousseau."

* * * * *

On the day of the great choosing, the scene in the large hall of the Prefect's *yamun* defies all description. Only the great poet of the Sung dynasty could do justice to it.

The province of the Four Streams is famous for the beauty of its women; and on this occasion the loveliest forms and the fairest faces were all in one basket.

"You miserable creature," screamed his wife.

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The police never had such a day's work. Not till the Prefect, assuming his sternest official manners, had called for a one inch bamboo and administered summary justice on the principal offenders, was sufficient silence obtained to start business.

Such a galaxy of beauty, such a battery of dark almond eyes, such an array of exquisite features lit up with pleasure and expectancy, was more than mortal man could endure with equanimity.

And, before the Imperial Commission, as elsewhere, Pearl stood like a phœnix among crows, resplendent as the moon on the fourteenth night, and fascinating as a fairy. While others owed no small debt to the "make-up" box and the costumier, Pearl had discarded the lavish adornments and richly embroidered robes provided by her mother, and trusted solely to a simple country gown and her own natural beauty.

"May the graves of my ancestors be dishonoured," exclaimed Commissioner Ma-o, "if the lady Chao is not a Pearl of price—a jewel meet for the Imperial Crown." And, under pretext of consultation, he hummed in the Prefect's private ear:

"Of all the girls where'er I've been,
Of all the girls my eyes have seen,
This pretty Pearl of winsome mien
Will make Lo Yang the prettiest Queen."

While the Prefect, responsive to the influence of so many pairs of feminine eyes bent upon him in sweet simplicity, relaxed so far as to tap the Commissioner playfully on the near arm with his sandal-wood fan.

It was a delicate business, that of choosing the maidens fit to be "basket and broom"* to Prince Yang; but Ma-o was a connoisseur in such matters and at last his list was filled. After the damsels, the fathers.

Chief Commissioner Ma-o was troubled with an itching palm. Nothing served to allay the irritation but a liberal application of the metal called silver. It was the custom for the fathers of the "chosen" to provide the "remedy" when Ma-o had named the right amount.

In the usual course, he called upon Mr. Chun to arrange for Pearl's portrait to be painted by the artist attached to the Imperial Commission; and incidentally mentioned that the fee for giving Pearl a "good place" was five thousand *taels* of silver.†

"Do you want to ruin me!" exclaimed Chun.

"I'm very sorry if you haven't such a paltry sum by you," said Ma-o, "but really I haven't time to discuss the matter. So many girls to look after."

Chun offered four thousand.

"I've no taste for bargaining," answered Ma-o. "You can send it on. But I'm leaving as soon as the portraits are completed; so you'll excuse me reminding you that 'a stitch in time saves the garment.'"

That there was some occult threat conveyed by this hint, Chun quite understood; and while he was bemoaning the fate of fathers who only reared daughters for other men's sons to run off with, in tripped Mrs. Chun, eager to learn how "it had gone off."

"You miserable creature," screamed his wife before Chun had half finished. "I see what it is. *My* daughter against *your* money! And do you suppose that I shall allow the girl's chance to be ruined by your stinginess? I should be ashamed to squabble over a paltry thousand *taels*. What if he has asked you twice as much as he demanded from Koo Pee—it's a compliment, you poor, blind mole, that cannot see it. Isn't Pearl worth it? The Commissioner, it seems, has a far better idea of the girl's value than you have, though you do claim to be her father. There! I do not want to make a scene! I never knew a man who understood a woman yet! For goodness sake, Chun let's have no scandal. Send him the money with your apologies, and let there be no more words about it."

Commissioner Ma-o was handed over to the public executioner.

So Ma-o got his five thousand *taels*, and, having directed the damsels to appear at the Emperor's Palace in the Purple City* on a day named, packed up his portraits and departed. But the Commissioner had pigs of his own to bring to market—nieces he called them; and as blood is thicker than water, their names appeared high up in the list of the ninety-five.

Spring Day and Summer Cloud were not bad-looking girls; and their uncle had taken a few pardonable liberties with their official portraits. But not a girl of them all stood the ghost of a chance alongside Pearl, the lady Chao.

No sooner thought, no sooner done. Out comes Pearl's portrait, off goes Ma-o to a private artist—result, a copy, in which Pearl the inimitable appeared as a passably good-looking lot, but nothing to sing over. And, behold when the Emperor inspected the miniatures, bang went the Imperial pencil through the lady Chao's name; and poor Pearl was bundled off with the "rank and file," who were sent to console themselves in the "Cold Wing" of the Purple Palace.

Time will not permit of us returning to the village of Everlasting Felicity to see how it fared with Mr.

* Chinese synonym for wife. † £1,500.

* The innermost of the four cities of Peking.

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and Mrs. Chun. But exactly twelve months after the marriage of Lo Yang and Spring Day, the Emperor happened to be strolling in his grounds one quiet evening when he was startled by the sound of singing. The voice was of such entrancing sweetness that involuntarily he raised his eyes to Heaven, expecting to see a Celestial vision. Presently, however, he discovered that the melodious strains came from a window in that part of the building known vulgarly as the "Cold Wing." It was Pearl singing to her lute. Afraid to move for fear of losing a single note, the Emperor remained rooted to the spot.

The words, the air, the voice made a deep impression upon his Majesty's mind. For several minutes after the singing ceased he kept his place, only withdrawing when the syren sounds no longer lingered in his ear.

To summon the singer to his presence was the first command he issued, and scarcely had the Gracious One composed his features and settled himself on his cushions, when Pearl, in all the piquancy of *déshabille*, appeared before him. The sight of her ravishing beauty filled him with such utter astonishment that for some time he was unable to do aught but stare—stricken dumb by a loveliness surpassing all that the mind of man could picture or conceive.

You may guess it did not take long after this to pull the crooked straight and put the saddle on the right horse.

Spring Day, as a punishment for the crime of being niece to a wicked old uncle, was packed off to the "Cold Wing," while Commissioner Ma-o was handed over to the public executioner, with instructions to start him at once on a visit to the Yellow Springs by the longest of the usual official routes. But soon all else was forgotten in the preparations that were being made for the marriage of Lo Yang with Pearl, the lady Chao.

The wedding was celebrated at the next full moon, which the astrologers declared to be one of the most fortunate in the whole year for marriages. And amid the merry strains of the Dragon and the Phœnix from the massed bands of the Peking garrison, and the acclaiming shouts of "may a hundred sons, and thousand grandsons be your portion" from the seething million, Pearl was lifted over the pan of charcoal at the threshold, and entered the Purple Palace as the beauteous bride of Lo Yang, the Emperor Yang Te's eldest son.

H. Hunter.

Old Karl's Secret.

A delightful September afternoon found me, after more than a year's wandering through Europe, seated upon the low, squatty porch of one of the little inns near Czegled, upon the road towards Buda-Pesth. I was smoking one of those monstrous meerschaum pipes, which the Germans love so well. It was a marvel of workmanship, the design of the bowl being a Turk's head.

I frequently took it from my mouth to rub the rich mahogany-coloured stem, or to examine the unique carving, for I doted upon that pipe. As I sat thus engaged, I noticed upon the steps of the porch an old man, apparently of the peasant class, whom I had observed about the inn on the day previous. He, too, seemed to be admiring the pipe intensely, for he eyed it as though he had never seen one before.

"I wonder what he thinks of it," thought I.

That was speedily disclosed, for no sooner had I caught the old fellow's eyes than he arose, and approaching, said respectfully, in good English:

"That is a very fine pipe you have there."

I was a bit surprised to be addressed in my own language by one of such humble appearance.

"Oh," I replied, "do you speak English? Come over here and talk with me, then. Yes; that's a beauty; I picked it up in Constantinople last year. Ever seen one like it?"

A smile spread over the face of the Hungarian.

"No, sir; never. It must have cost much money."

"More than I ought to have paid, perhaps; but I am fond of curios, and make it a point to get some wherever I travel."

"Yes?" somewhat eagerly replied the Hungarian; "and have you a large collection?"

"My private collection is said to be one of the finest in my native land. Where did you learn to speak English? You pronounce it remarkably well."

"My father taught me. He was bred at Prague," was the simple reply. "How come you to be here? Seek you here for specimens?"

"Yes, partly. I am on the way to procure some memento from the famous battlefields of Napoleon—Austerlitz and Wagram, you know."

A dark shade passed over the old man's face. It was a strong, stern countenance, very dark, but beaming with intelligence. At the mention of Napoleon's name, he frowned gloomily.

"Tyrant! Devil!" he muttered in German. "His army plundered my father's estate to the last spear of grass. His soldiery burnt our home. The estate itself was confiscated by old Francis, upon some false charges of treason, brought by General Mack, and my aged father became a wanderer upon the earth, and died in a shepherd's hut."

I could perceive the features of the peasant working strongly as he strove to master the powerful passions of grief and vengeance which surged mightily through his soul. Then, brightening once more, he exclaimed:

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"Mementoes from Austeriltz and Wagram? Why should you wish to be reminded of German misfortune, or Russian poltroonery, or French bloodthirstiness? There are better things for you here if you are able to obtain them."

"How 'able'? Will not money buy them?" I demanded.

"No, no; money buys not all things. Are you from London?"

"Yes," I replied.

A fresh gleam brightened the old peasant's face.

My curiosity was pricked. I took my pipe from my mouth and stared hard at the Hungarian. There was a suggestiveness about his conversation that was puzzling, but his countenance thus far betrayed nothing. I was, however, as much amused as curious.

"Tell me what there is here which I cannot get for money?" I said.

The evident anxiety and eagerness of the old peasant became intense.

"No, no," he replied. "I cannot tell you what there is, nor the price which is demanded, until I know more of you. Who are you, and what is your business in Austria?"

I began to be aroused. For answer to his question I gave him my name and address, adding: "I am only a sightseer on the Continent." I had in my pocket, with my passport, a letter from Francis, nephew of the Emperor Ferdinand, to some savants of Vienna. I had become acquainted with him some several weeks previous, and he had good-naturedly given it upon his own suggestion, for we had some tastes in common. These I handed to the queer old fellow, more in a spirit of fun than anything else, and quietly leant back to watch the effect. His face shone with genuine pleasure when he read them.

"Yes, yes; you are fortunate to know such men as Francis and Herr Loestein and Professor Rahl. I believe, too, that I am fortunate to meet you. I believe that you are the man for whom I have been waiting these many years."

Plainly, thought I, here is a queer old character, who probably has some heirloom of which he wishes to dispose at a good price. I said, half banteringly:

"Why have you waited for anyone? Can you have anything to sell? Come, perhaps we can transact a little business together."

The peasant seemed to shrink timidly within himself. At length he replied: "Walk with me down the road to yonder trees. What I say to you must not be overheard, even by walls, for they have both eyes and ears."

Surely it could do no harm to humour the old fellow. I rose, and we walked rapidly to the point indicated, and seated ourselves beneath the shade of a fine oak.

"Now, then," said I, "out with it."

The Hungarian burst forth impetuously:

"Sir, listen. I have a secret to sell which will make you a richer man than you have ever dared to dream, and me both rich and happy once more. I have something to dispose of, but it lies buried in the earth, and shall lie there for ever unless you, with your nationality, your money, and your influence, and I with my knowledge, unite to drag it to the light. But even you cannot do this unless you will swear a solemn oath that, upon my revealing to you the nature of this secret, you will deal faithfully with me."

"Whew!" I whistled through puckered lips. "A sort of buried treasure fiend, I take it. Wonder who and what he is?" Aloud to the Hungarian, whose dark old eyes were flashing with excitement, I said: "What is your name and occupation, and where do you live?"

"I am but a humble shepherd now. My flock is upon the Carpathians. My son tends it while I am absent. My name is only Karl, for it is not safe to tell you my surname. Our family was years ago exiled, and I may only live here in my native land in peril of my life. More than this you shall not know until we have agreed further."

The hurried, broken manner in which these sentences were uttered made an additional impression upon me.

"What kind of an oath do you want me to take?" I asked.

"Go with me to the Prothonotary in Czegled. He will draw the paper."

"Oh, I see! You want my bond, do you? Now look here, you should know by this time that I am a man of honour. I do now solemnly promise that I will not reveal the secret to anyone, if, upon learning its nature, we cannot agree further. If that is not sufficient"—here I refilled the meerschaum—"say not another word."

Great beads of perspiration started to his face. His eyes rolled and flashed, and his bosom heaved almost convulsively. He gasped forth at length:

"Sir, as you will have it, I must trust to you, or perhaps never again have an opportunity. I am already an old man. I must," sinking his voice to a whisper, and drawing so near me that his breath was hot upon my face. "On the little plot of ground that I call home, at the foot of the Carpathians, I have found a tomb, filled with untold wealth."

"Why don't you go and get it, then?" I demanded, still half amused, and adding to myself, "I made a guess that time."

"Why? Ah?" he exclaimed bitterly, "do not fancy that you are now in free England. Go and get it—for whom? Myself? No! but for the coffers of my Emperor."

A light suddenly dawned upon me. "I see, if you dig it up Ferdinand will seize it as treasure trove; while if I should smuggle it out of the country we alone get the benefit."

The peasant flung his arms about my neck, and fairly hugged me as he cried: "True, true! And more, the treasure I have found is not in coin alone, but"—here he thrust his hand into his bosom—"jewels and plate." He withdrew his hand, and placed a small sheepskin bag in mine. "There is the proof that I have spoken no lie, and thus I show you why it is that while really rich beyond computation, I must yet remain poor and humble—as now."

I opened the bag, and to my amazement it contained a number of strangely cut gems—rubies and diamonds and emeralds—of purest lustre. It was now my turn to become excited.

"Why, where in the name of ——" I began.

"Hold! Would you have still other proof? Here, then—you are a collector of curiosities—what make you of this?"

He drew from his bosom another packet, carefully depositing it on my lap. With hands all trembling with nervous excitement I untied the strings and drew forth a small crown or coronet of pure gold. What the peasant said during the next five minutes I never knew, although I heard his voice in animated talk. I only gazed in mute astonishment at the slim golden circlet in my hands. The metal was cleanly polished, showing a

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workmanship which was unmistakably of great age. Carefully turning it over and over I discovered some cabalistic figures or letters engraved on its front. Held so that the light would the better fall upon them, I made out the pregnant initials, S.P.Q.R. (Senate and people of Rome—*Senatus, populus que Romanus.*)

Had one of the old emperors of the Eternal City suddenly arisen from the dust and confronted me I could hardly have been more agitated than upon beholding so startling a memento of Imperial Rome. It flashed across me that the Hungarian was possibly telling me the exact truth. He might have stumbled upon the ancient burial place of some colonial nobleman or governor, who, during his lifetime, had been voted the golden crown by the Senate and people of Rome; or, possibly, it might be a deposit of the plunder of some outlaw, who had died with his secret untold. I could thus account for the presence of a considerable treasure in the tomb, and could also readily see why the old peasant had not been able to profit by his discovery.

Had one in his circumstances offered any of the old jewels or precious metals for sale, inquiry would at once have been set on foot as to where he had obtained them, and the old fellow would have been forced to disclose the hoard for the benefit of His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, and perhaps suffer the extreme penalty of concealing treasure trove from the monarch —death. Already those internecine disturbances, ending in Ferdinand's abdication, were beginning to make head, and the Austrian treasury, never plethoric, would have welcomed any addition however small.

My visit to the plains of Austerlitz was, for the time, forgotten, and all my energies were concentrated upon concluding a treaty with the peasant, and perfecting a plan whereby the treasure might be got safely out of Austria. As Karl had said, he was getting old, and now, if ever, was the time to realise the hoard. He had no friends in whom he could confide, and must depend upon a stranger, like myself, and take chances upon being fairly dealt with.

The country was at this time filled with police spies and Government agents of all kinds. How to elude these was a problem which bothered me considerably. I solved it, however, with the aid of an influential resident at Vienna, who, after much difficulty, procured me a dispensation from the Government to transport my trunks and baggage through and out of the empire without police inspection. This was done upon my representation that they contained nothing but curiosities of no particular value to anyone but myself—which was true enough at that time—and that they were liable to irreparable injury or destruction from an overhauling by careless hands. Armed with this document, given under the seal of the Secretary of State, I knew that I need fear no meddling with my baggage. The next thing to be done was to get the treasure.

Supplied with a few necessary tools, a few days later found us in the old peasant's hut, in a deep ravine in the blue Carpathians. The situation of the hut was one of absolute and utter isolation; not even a shepherd kindled fire within four miles. The hut was a one-room affair—as humble a place of abode as I ever entered. The son was absent with the flocks when we arrived. I had, fortunately, brought with me a supply of provisions, which added materially to the scanty larder of the shepherd.

It was after nightfall when we reached the hut, but so eager was I to be at the buried treasure that I could scarcely restrain myself from compelling old Karl to show me the spot at once. When morning came, Karl said that the work must be done in the darkness, so I was obliged to curb my impatience once more.

"Does your son know of the treasure?" I asked.

"He knows nothing of its value nor situation, although he is aware of its existence. The poor lad is——" Here he choked, and ended by tapping his forehead. "'Twas the fever did it," he added a moment later, and tears trickled plentifully down the brown cheeks. "He went to Wagram, where I thought he might get better employment. When I next saw my son some months later, his intellect was darkened."

By eight o'clock we were ready to set forth. The peasant now was feverishly anxious to bring the gold to light. The meal over, we sailed forth equipped with lanterns and a spade and pick. An eighth of a mile down the ravine was the sheepfold, and towards this old Karl silently took his way, I following. This fold was a large pen, with a covered shelter at one end about five feet high. Passing through the bars, we entered the pen, and then lighted our lanterns. I was on tip-toe with suppressed excitement. As the light streamed out, I noticed in one corner a heap of rubbish. Diving into this with both hands, the peasant soon laid the ground bare, and then exclaimed: "Come! Our work is here!"

I needed no second bidding, but immediately set to work with the pick, the shepherd throwing the dirt behind us. Soon a large round boulder was exposed to view.

"Behind that rock," said he, "is the cave. We may easily roll it away, for I put it there."

In an hour the whole work of excavation was done, and the mouth of a deep cavern in the hillside was opened. I dared not enter it at once for fear of poisonous air; but old Karl, who now seemed half crazed with excitement, crawled in. In a moment he crept back, nearly overcome with asphyxia. Plainly, the air must be purified before we could proceed. While the shepherd was recovering, I went to the hut and returned at once with a large bag of powder. Placing this as far into the cave as I dared go, I laid a trail to the entrance and lighted it. Immediately there was a dull flash, followed by a blinding cloud of smoke gushing from the opening. As soon as this had cleared I took my lantern and again crawled into the cave. The explosion of the powder had driven out the foul air, and I could breathe easily.

The cave was deep, but not large, and proceeding to the far end, I discovered a shelf of stone, upon which lay a huge metal coffin. Clambering upon the ledge, I carefully examined the casket, to discover, if possible, something of its age. It was apparently very old, and far too heavy for me to lift. I struck a few blows upon it with the pick, and stooped to notice the effect. It was startling and unlooked for. A dull, yellow gleam at the point of impact was all, but quite enough to convince me that the coffin before me was doubtless of pure gold.

Straightening up in astonishment, my attention was attracted to a large copper plate, fastened into the wall of the cavern just above the coffin. It was green with verdigris. Brushing this away as well as I was able, I could perceive an inscription which had evidently been in Latin. After many minutes' study I made out a few of the letters, still decipherable, the remainder were hopelessly defaced by the chemical action of the moisture and gases in the cave, but there, still clear cut and bold, were the two words:

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"ATTIIA sum . . . . ."

I knew that I stood in the presence of the mortal remains of Attiia, the Hun, Destroyer of Nations and Plunderer of the Roman Empire.

The truth, as it flashed across my brain, was overwhelming; and I turned and ran to the entrance of the cavern, overpowered at the tremendous discovery I had made. Old Karl was just entering. I caught him by the collar, and hugged him in a frenzy.

"Karl! Karl!" I cried, "within this vault lie the spoils of the mightiest city the world has ever seen! Beyond doubt, we are in the presence of untold millions of wealth, plundered from Rome and her provinces by barbarian hordes, and buried with Attiia the Hun."

I told him of the inscription on the copper plate, and together we returned and examined it. My companion was unacquainted with Latin, which had been much affected by the conquering Huns; but he could clearly read the name Attiia staring at us from the wall of the tomb. It was too real to seem real. So soon as our excitement had somewhat abated, I inquired where we must look for the treasure.

"You are standing in it," he replied.

This proved to be true. The floor of the cavern was of rock; but it was covered with silver and gold in every form of workmanship, to a depth of two feet.

We were overcome with excitement. At once returning to the hut, we brought to the cavern my three great trunks, now empty, and several heavy packing cases, and filled them with this lost wealth of old Rome and her colonies, and then we had made no perceptible diminution of the vast hoard. There were doubtless one hundred million pounds sterling at our command, and we laboured until long after daylight, picking and choosing the heaviest pieces of metal and choicest gems.

It was far into the day when we returned to the air, and replaced the stone before the mouth of the cavern. I seemed to have lived ten years in that single night within the bowels of the mountain. The old shepherd, on the contrary, had apparently renewed his youth by twice that time. He refused to leave the fold, when I declared myself utterly exhausted with hunger and fatigue, but remained to guard the spot, while I departed to get food and to sleep. Hastily devouring a half-eaten loaf and some dried meat, I threw myself on the heap of skins in the corner, and was almost instantly asleep.

It was again night when I awoke. The old shepherd was still absent, so I filled a bag with some food, and at once bent my steps towards the cavern. Karl was there, and told me that he had neither eaten nor slept during my absence. He snatched the food I had brought, and ate ravenously, and then we re-entered the cave.

After many hours' discussion, I persuaded the old peasant to consent to our leaving with what we had secured, showing him that at some time in the near future he could buy his peace with the Government, return to Austria, and repurchase his family estate. That then it would be far easier for us to get the remainder of the treasure and dispose of it. In the meantime the cavern could be concealed as it had before been. Karl finally agreed to this plan, and after removing every vestige of our labour from the outside, we returned to the hut.

I intended to go the next morning and buy an ox team and cart to carry away the priceless boxes and trunks, and by early dawn I was on the road. Two days passed before I found what I sought. Being unfamilar with ox driving, I employed a peasant to take the team to old Karl's hut. I was fearfully eager to get back to him, and hurried on the driver at the team's best pace; but on the afternoon of the third day, while only about two miles from the cave, we stopped a few minutes to rest upon a low summit on the opposite side of the valley.

The previous ten days had been so crowded with startling events that now I began to feel the strain. My accidental meeting with the shepherd, and his strange story; the enormous wealth at my command; the amazing discovery of the identity of the tomb, which would make mine one of the famous names of the nineteenth century; and, lastly, the responsibility resting upon me of taking the treasure safely out of Austria to a market.

A strange quivering ran through the ground. For an instant I fancied that my highly-wrought nerves were playing me tricks, then another long-continued tremor, and my ears were deafened by a mighty crash, as though the world were bursting asunder. I sprang up and looked across the valley where the hut lay, but could now discern it not. The giant hill, which had stood sentinel for fourteen centuries over the most magnificent treasure ever accumulated by human hands, had split in two, and was even then falling into the ravine, a frightful spectacle.

A second of suspense, and with an awful roar it struck a wild chaos of earth and rock, and a vast cloud of dust arose and curtained the catastrophe. The shock threw me, half stunned, to the ground. In a moment I was on my feet again, though all the hills trembled and rocked with the vibration. I shrieked in fear and despair, for it seemed as though the earth had thrown off her adhesion to the solar system, and were rushing to destruction in the voids of space; but as minutes passed, the blinding dust cloud which overhung the ravine cleared, revealing the true extent of the cataclysm. Alas! for all my hopes! A million tons of granite rock were heaped upon the spot where old Karl —rest his soul—had built his cot and sheepfold.

The great strain under which I had been labouring and the shock of the appalling disaster were too much to be borne by human nerves. I swooned away, and for many hours lay as one in the arms of Death.

There was no mystery about the great upheaval. In the half of the hill yet standing I could see what had been a great hollow basin, evidently of volcanic origin, showing traces of the recent presence of water. Almost straight up from this, through what had been the centre of the mountain, was a channel, terminating at the lake bed on the summit. The water from the lake had doubtless been centuries in percolating through to the basin beneath. Once this communication was established, however, the channel must have rapidly enlarged. It looked to be four feet in diameter. The weight of the water in this tall column and in the rising lake, acting with growing and resistless power upon the accumulated water in the lower chamber, had burst asunder the mountain as surely as ever was Herculean labour performed by hydrostatic pressure.

I made no effort to locate the possible whereabouts of the hut and sheepfold—that had been a hopeless task for an army. Never again would the eye of man behold the lost treasure of plundered Rome. And old Karl, with his poor, soul-darkened son, should rest through all eternity amidst the mass of treasure we had so nearly won, with the broken mountain for his headstone. and the heart of another for his tomb, side by side with the dust of Attiia the Hun.

De Leon Hall.

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A DETERMINED LOVER.

I THINK it may be stated, without fear of successful contradiction, that at no period of a man's existence does Cupid strike so deeply and cause so much sleeplessness as at the age of one score or thereabouts.

I always feel sorry for a chap in this sort of pickle, and I felt particularly sorry for poor Shorty Fleming. I knew I ought to discourage him, but he was such a good little fellow, and so much in earnest, that I would have defied a far more severe man than his brother Jack for his sake. Besides, Shorty was not one of the chaps who got over anything easily, and I knew failure would go hard with him.

Jack was not the only "obstacle." Sam Parker, Nettie's papa, also objected. He was not a stern, unreasonable parent, by any means, but his objections, even if presented good naturedly, were none the less formidable. Parker was a shrewd man, with a total disbelief in the ability of womankind to use reason.

Nettie was the only daughter and the youngest child in a family of seven, and the old man, close-fisted as he was, spared no expense in educating her liberally. It was only natural, therefore, for him to object, especially as Nettie was only eighteen, and had only been out of school a few months.

He called on Jack one afternoon, not casually, as he usually called, on his way to or from town, but with a direct purpose. Jack lay on the sofa. I was reading to him when Parker walked in.

"How are you, Fleming? Laid up, are you? How are you, Faber? Warm, isn't it? Thanks, I will sit down for a minute."

And he sat down on the edge of a chair, and began tracing figures on the floor with his cane. He seemed nervous, and I rose to leave the room; but he waved his hand and said:

"Sit still, Wilson; sit still. I haven't got anything to say but what you may hear."

Here the old man stiffened up in his seat, and stated the object of his mission in a good-natured but thoroughly decided way, closing with:

"Now, Fleming, I haven't got any objection to him—not in the least. He's a tip-top good boy, and all that; but it isn't in reason that I'm going to spend all that money in educating a daughter, and then let her go and marry another youngster without any money. And that's what it'll come to."

Now, Parker's remarks were in the nature of a revelation to us. Of course, we knew Shorty had put in a good many evenings at the Parker domicile, but we had never guessed that his visits had any significance. A courtship, too, with six big brothers hanging round, is a difficult matter.

It is easy enough to fall — just fall — in love with a girl if there is no one to hinder. But with six young men, with whom one is on good terms, sitting round and occupying a large portion of one's attention, it is a matter of getting in love, which, accomplished, is rather more serious than a mere fall into the same.

Fleming sat up and ran his fingers through his hair gravely.

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Parker," he said. "I don't know what to say to Percy, but I will try a little strategy, and see if he can't be kept at home more. If that doesn't work, I must talk to him."

And here began my connection with Shorty's love affair.

That evening I was writing busily when someone opened the door of my den and walked in. It was Shorty. He sat down quietly and took up a paper, which he looked at for several minutes, while I scratched away at my work. Then he threw down the paper suddenly, and turned to me with: "Wilson, what was old Parker here for to-day?"

I tried to dissemble, but Shorty is no fool, and interrupted.

"Oh, nonsense," said he, "you think I'm a baby. Now, honestly, what was he here for?"

Finally, I told him about the conversation between his brother and Parker. He sat silent for a few minutes. I could see his face twitch. Then he turned his eyes to me and said slowly: "Wilson, I know I'm young and all that, but—I know my own mind. Jack's a good brother, and feels in duty bound to take care of me, but I fancy I can look after myself. I—I've made up my mind to marry that girl, if she'll have me, and all the Jacks and Parkers in the world can't stop me."

And Mr. Percival Fleming set his mouth hard, and

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walked out. He called at Parker's the next evening, despite Jack's strategy.

There was another caller at Parker's that evening in the person of Morris Cottrell, a wealthy merchant from a neighbouring town. Shorty, when he got home, mentioned the fact to me with some feeling in his tones. Cottrell was a man of forty, well read, and a gentleman, and the prospect of having him for a rival would have sent despair to the heart of any penniless young man less determined than Shorty Fleming.

One evening Shorty came to my room. He had seen Sam Parker that day, and the latter had told him, as gently as possible, some galling truths about his age and his penniless condition, concluding with the cheerful information that Nettie had almost decided to accept Cottrell.

Of course, Shorty was despondent, but he was none the less determined.

"Wilson, I am going to see her to-morrow afternoon, and—and ask her," he said.

The time and the hour favoured Shorty; but I hardly think Nettie knew her own mind. The boy who came riding slowly home through the shadows next evening was a very much downcast boy indeed.

He told me all about it later—how Nettie had wavered, and finally told him that she could give him no answer. She cared a great deal for him, she said, but she was not sure she cared enough for him. Besides, her father objected to him, and she could never cross her father's wishes, when he had done so much for her.

Sam Parker must have heard of this interview, and made up his mind to do something. Although he was usually so good-natured, he was as determined as a bull-dog, and I think he used some influence in deciding matters, for two weeks later he dropped in to tell Jack that Nettie and Cottrell would be married two months later.

Shorty must have seen news in my face, for after supper he drew me aside and asked me what I knew. I hated to tell him, but did so, the best way I could. The poor lad stood still as a stone for several seconds. Then, with a shuddering sob, he turned away. In the morning he was gone with his horse and clothes, leaving no word.

Jack and I talked it over during the day, and he expressed a great deal of regret, thinking, however, that Nettie had decided for herself, and that Shorty had no one to blame for his failure.

"If it had been different," he went on, "and Percy had persevered and won, I would, too, have given in, and I think Parker would as well, for next year Percy will come into a little money. You see, I have never told him of it because I wanted him to grow up on his own merits, and be self-reliant. I think it has been for the best. Joe never knew, until he was of age, that he had anything, and we didn't tell Percy of it then, because he was only seventeen. Joe put his money into the farm here, and kept quiet about it."

He sat silent for a minute, then continued.

"Of course, this is between ourselves. But—do you know, I wish the boy had won. He's a good deal of a man, and, now I come to think of it, the affair has hit him hard. They could have waited a couple of years, you know." And Jack walked off slowly, taking long whiffs at his pipe.

Weeks passed, during which I saw Nettie Parker several times. She seemed indifferent. Her laugh was not the jolly laugh I had been accustomed to hear, and she seemed pensive at times. Was it her approaching wedding, or—Shorty? I hoped it was Shorty. But somehow when people pine they seem to lose colour and get thin, and Nettie Parker did neither. And still no word from Shorty, and the day for the wedding only a week away.

The people for miles round were invited to the wedding, which old Sam Parker said would "make people talk." I rode into town on behalf of Jack and myself for something to present to the bride-elect. In the post-office some one tapped me on the shoulder. I turned. It was Shorty Fleming—Shorty, smiling quite happily.

"How long before you will be going out?" he asked.

"I'm ready now."

"All right! Wilson, go and borrow a horse until to-morrow—tell them yours is lame, and you'll have to lead him. Nobody has recognised me in this overcoat, hat, and false moustache, and I don't want them to. I'll walk out, and walk up the road. Hurry up with the horses!"

The half-hundred guests at Parker's had been enjoying themselves to the full. All of Mrs. Parker's good things had been stowed away where they would do the most good. The minister from town was getting ready for the ceremony, for a special license had actually been obtained, and the guests were bustling about, amid some confusion, trying to find the best points for observation. Nettie Parker, pale for once, stood near the front door, pulling her fingers nervously, waiting supposedly for her father.

Someone knocked at the door. Nettie pulled it open, gave a little cry, seized a man's hat from the back of a chair and an overcoat from a peg near by, and rushed out, slamming the door. Everybody who saw the performance stood still—dazed. Then, as we heard horses' hoofs clattering up the road, there was a rush for the outside.

Up the road, disappearing fast, were two horses, whose riders were evidently in a hurry. There was another rush—this time for the stables—led by old Sam Parker. But, somehow, the doors would not open. They had been nailed up very securely by a person who was at that moment making hypocritical efforts to get one of them open.

At this juncture, Cottrell, as cool as if he had never thought of attending his own wedding, came up and spoke quietly to old Parker, who was so dazed that he had not as yet opened his mouth.

The old man started and turned to those who were near. I missed what he said, for Cottrell spoke to me.

"I told the old gentleman that it was no use trying to stop them. If they mean to get married, they will."

Then in a tone that contained no trace of bitterness, he continued:

"It is far better to have happened now than—than later. And, as it is, I think there will be only one unhappy person instead of three."

That was Morris Cottrell—philosopher and man.

Mr. and Mrs. Percival Fleming sent their address and were invited to return. When he saw them, Parker remarked: "You have got some nerve for a boy. Are you not both ashamed of yourselves?"

No, they were not; and after Nettie had had a good cry in her father's arms, the runaways were ready to receive the congratulations of their friends, foremost among whom was Morris Cottrell.

Holland Clark.

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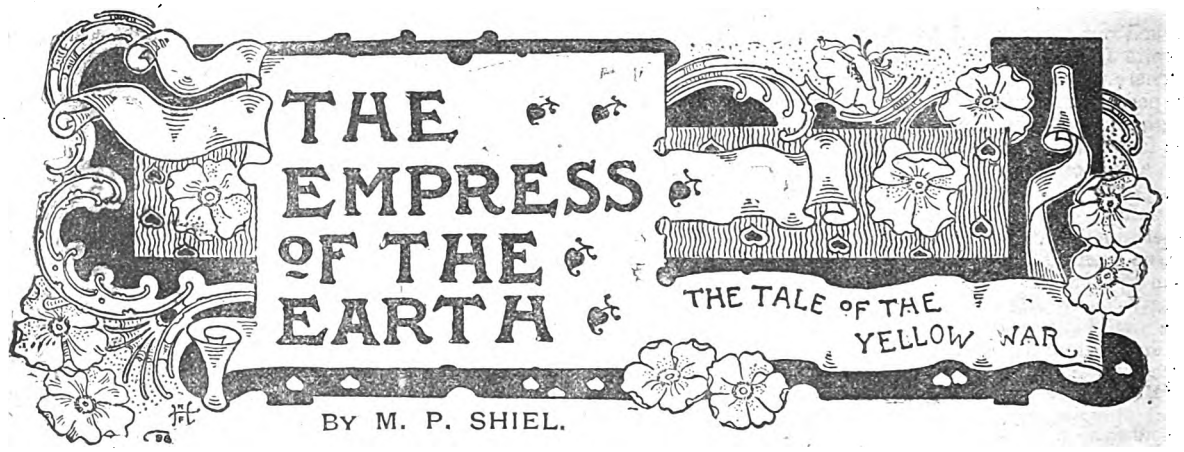

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

John and Yen.

John Hardy, having arrived at Vladivostok, had engaged an interpreter, and spent two whole days in trying to charter some sort of craft to take him to Nagasaki, where he hoped either to meet his ship, or hear about her *locale*.

His impatience was nothing less than fevered; for, through his interpreter, he heard that no *rencontre* had as yet taken place between the hostile fleets; but that, within a week or so, it was expected that the allied French, German and Russian vessels would meet the allied British and Japanese in battle. Such was the report brought by junks from Nagasaki and Fusan, and by caravan from Newchwang and Kin-chow.

An engagement had hitherto not occurred for the simple reason that the French, German and Russian fleets had practically been in hiding from the British; and the reason why they had been in hiding was the very simple one that they were finding extraordinary difficulties in the matter of coaling, the British and Japanese having, as a matter of fact, created a "corner" by buying up nearly all the coal to be obtained in the East some weeks previously; so that from Singapore to Vladivostok the cry had been coal! coal!

Now, however, as it seemed—so said the reports—the French, German, and Russian vessels had coal in plenty! Whence this supply had come, no one could conceive. It was a mystery—but a certainty.

The battle, therefore, so long delayed, must come soon.

John Hardy's pulses beat faster when this forecast reached him; and his chagrin was intense when, after anxious search, he found no *compradore* willing or able to secure him a passage to Nagasaki. The East was in suspense, waiting with panting heart for the future, without interest in the present. It turned a listless ear to John Hardy's pleadings.

Nothing remained for it but Port Arthur, where, as he was told, he would be sure to find a willing junk. But the journey was immense, slow, arduous. John Hardy almost gave up hope of being in time for the battle.

But with strong heart he set out. He anticipated no danger on entering Chinese territory. China was not formally at war with England. He did not know that, even in times of the most settled quietude, no traveller's life was worth a rush in Northern China—witness the case of Sir Harry Parks.

He had with him quite a little retinue; and he travelled in a palanquin borne between mules.

The northern Chinese were a hard, ferocious, and treacherous race—considerably more so than the southern. They were also very much larger and stronger men,—rascals tall, and lean, and brawny, their bony toughness being derived from the Tartar blood with which the northern Chinese tribes were infused. Their language, too, was very different to the southern dialects, and, above all, their walk. The southerners walked on the flat of their feet like Europeans; the northerners swung along on their heels, with a backward slant of the body, like a statue put to lean with its back against a wall.

At Hunshun John Hardy stopped to rest for a night at a little two-roomed inn; and here it was that, as soon as he was asleep, a consultation occurred between the whole body of villagers and John's retinue of five.

The next morning, suspecting nothing, he went forward, this time in a shaky *jinricksha*, or Chinese mule-cart. He could no longer bear the swinging between the palanquin-mules. It had reduced him to a state of weakness, and he was now spitting up phlegm streaked with blood.

At every village now that they came to they were surrounded by increasing crowds, and increasing clamours. But always John's servants spoke some words to the people, which had the effect of restraining them. As he set out afresh, a throng of those skeleton visages would be there to gape greedily after him: but still, he did set out.

A sickness of the heart—a sickness of the stomach—grew upon him.

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Could Man—could Woman—be like this?

Every nerve in his gentle and loving nature rose in shuddering revolt against this race.

He saw the whisperings and confabulations between his men and the mobs, and, with his instinct for truth, suspected treachery. But he was now quite helpless.

Everywhere, as he advanced, his eye noted the drilling, drilling, to which the nation was being subjected.

But he was now very sick, and languid, and day by day sat propped against the side of the cart, staring wearily before him, under the growing heat of the sun. He was compelled to keep up his strength with sips of the deleterious Chinese spirit *samshu*; and the only food which he could procure for days was the sickening mess of rice and greens which forms the staple Chinese diet.

He descended the river Yalu in a gorgeously painted junk, drawn on each bank by a mule. Here he had some rest, lying in long dreams of quietude through the starlit nights of a Chinese spring on the deck of the junk. Never had the heavens and the earth seemed to him so lovely, and so enthralled in a mystery of peace, as in those vast sheeny nights of his descent of the Yalu. At Wigu he commenced the land-journey again, on mule-back this time, somewhat recovered in health.

He was given now to understand that he was being guided toward Port Arthur. Instead of this, he was being led northwards, toward Moukden.

At Moukden was a garrison of the old regular army; and the railway from thence to Tientsin, commenced some time before, had lately been completed.

At an inn at Moukden he was eating, when a Japanese officer, accompanied by an interpreter, entered the room, and bade John follow him. It was Yen How's decree that any white man found by chance in Northern China should be sent on to Pekin.

John Hardy was ineffably surprised, first, at finding himself in Moukden, and next in being hustled into a queer, low, dark railway-train, in the keeping of half-a-dozen gigantic pig-tails.

"But," he protested through his interpreter, "England is not at war with China!"

"No," said the Japanese with a grin, "but China is at war with England."

In the train, John's wrists were bound tight with a cord. His interpreter and servants had disappeared.

They reached Tientsin by train, and thence went on to the village of Tung-chow, five miles from Pekin, by junk up the Peiho. Just as the sun set they arrived at the mighty walls of Pekin, and had only time to rush between the gates, when the ponderous jaws of the city-portals clanged and roared behind them.

Pekin! multitudinous, unfathomable city, place of beauty and of horror, of romance, and of infamy! city of vast triple-boulevards, grand as the imagination of an architect, loathsome as the stench of a sewer, city of gauds and colours, vermilion, and emerald, and blue, and of temples, and avenues, of palaces and lakes and parks, immense, a world in itself, resembling in its tone and aspect no other of the cities of man!

Here only may the hoariness of our race on the earth, the vast age of the old world, be read even by the blind.

Whoever is a Dreamer, let him go and busy himself in Pekin. The city is itself a dream—an opium-dream.

It was necessary for John Hardy and his captors to pass through both the Tartar and the Chinese cities before reaching the Imperial City. Each of these three is inclosed within its own massive walls, independently of the great wall of the whole town. The Imperial City was sacred ground. Here resided the Supreme Power, and here also the Legations. The profane foot entered it on pain of death.

They passed through a number of thoroughfares, broad as three or four Holborns laid side by side, and long as vistas; streets thronging with camels, and jingling mules, and the booths of small merchants, and swaying pig-tails; and in an hour reached the Imperial Portal on mule-back.

The leader of the little band produced his brevet, and gained admittance. They proceeded slowly through a park, leading their animals now, and after traversing a number of secluded granite streets, and a long marble colonnade, entered the courtyard of a vast, low, white palace.

John Hardy, as they halted, leant wearily upon his mule. There was a hollow pain at his chest, and at the back of his shoulders. His lips were dry and cracked.

A door opened at the side of the courtyard, and a soft-footed official came to learn the reason of this intrusion.

A few words were spoken, and he turned away. In a quarter of an hour he was back again; and five minutes afterwards Yen How and John Hardy were face to face. For quite a minute Yen How continued to read his paper.

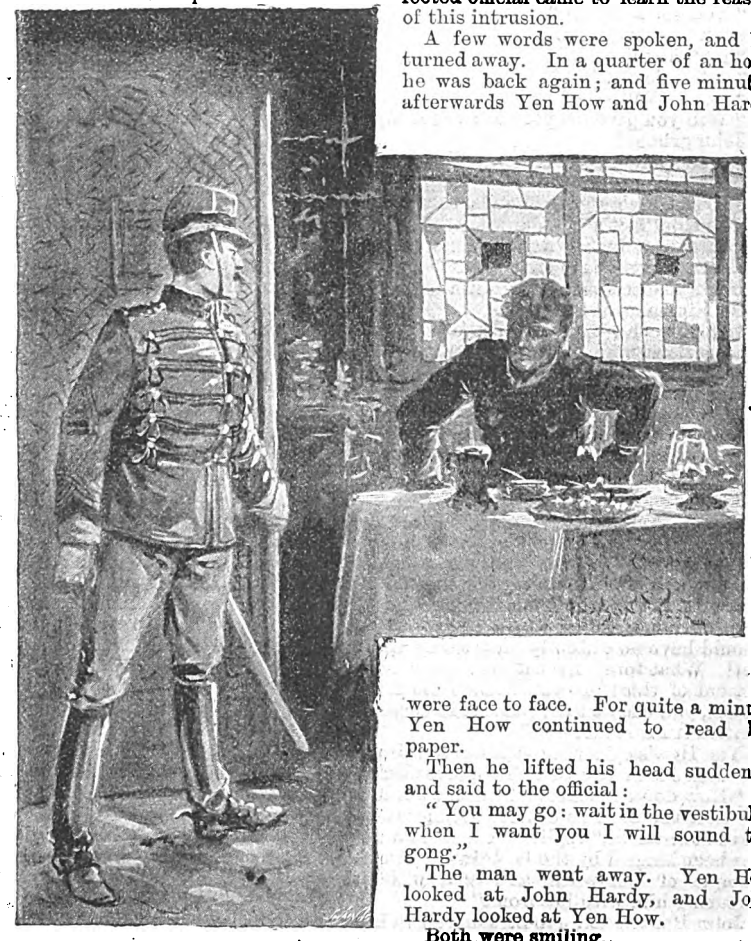
Then he lifted his head suddenly, and said to the official:

"You may go: wait in the vestibule: when I want you I will sound the gong."

The man went away. Yen How looked at John Hardy, and John Hardy looked at Yen How.

Both were smiling.

Yen How had still under his eye a slight scar where the fist of the



A Japanese officer entered the room.

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English soldier, John Brabant, had struck him in London. John Hardy's hands were unbound. This had been done ever since he had reached Tungchow when it had been necessary for him to mount a mule. He had on his usual blue pea-jacket; and under this, in the breast pocket, his loaded revolver.

In the colloquy which followed, one of these two men spoke an English as perfectly grammatical as that used by Tennyson or Macaulay, though with an intensely foreign something in his way of speaking it; the other spoke broken English. It was Yen How who used the good, and John Hardy the bad English.

"Who are you, sir?" said Yen How.

"Me Englishman," said John, "name John Hardy."

Yen had heard of the Battle of Shoreham, and he never forgot a name. He said:

"Don't talk pigeon English. I can understand you. I have lived some years in England."

"Oh, veer goot. Me no knowee that. Me talk good English to Chinaman."

"As you please. What is it you have come to China for?"

"Me sailor. Me come from Russia to Vladivostok to joinee my ship. What for you no letee me join it? Englishman and Chinaman good friends."

"Since when?"

"For always."

"You got a sister?"

John was surprised.

"No," he said.

"A female cousin?"

"Yes. Well,——"

"Will you give me your cousin for my wife?"

John grinned.

"Why, you queer Chin-chin-Chinaman!" he cried out.

"Ah, you say no, you see. Englishman and Chinaman are not such very good friends, then."

The chief fact about John Hardy was that he had eyes which saw a fact. As these last words fell upon his ears, he looked keenly into the placid face before him; and at once he realised that he was in the presence, not so much of a Chinaman, as of a Mind.

Instantly the instinct to speak pigeon-English left him. Unconsciously he began to speak naturally. This was a great compliment to Yen How.

"But look here, Mr. Chinaman," he said, "what is all this for? Who are you?"

"Well, since you ask, I am called Yen How."

John started.

"Ah! You know my name, I see," said Yen How; "I know yours, too."

"Yes. Very good—I am glad that I find myself with you, since you are who you are. You are acquainted with European ideas, and certainly a man of sense. I wish to throw myself on your benevolence. I find myself in such a silly sort of scrape. I am a poor sailor trying to join my ship. Knowing China as a friendly country, I thought I should have no difficulty in passing through. Yet here I am! What for? Isn't it very absurd? Please help me to get out of this! If you cannot set me free of your own power, you can at least put me in communication with the British Ambassador——"

Yen How's eyes went small in a smile.

"There isn't any British Ambassador any more," he said.

"How do you mean, sir?" asked John.

"It is the Chinese custom to hang thieves by the heels, head downwards," replied Yen. "The British Ambassador has been hanged by the heels in the square before the Pekin Temple of Confucius, and died while the people were torturing him with hot irons."

John Hardy's left eye-lid lowered in intense menace.

"That is not really so, Mr. Chinaman?"

"It is, my son."

"And whose doing was that? Not the Government of China's?"

"It was *my* doing, my son."

"Yours, Yen How?"

"Mine."

Now the two men were really in contact. They looked into each other's eyes, searchingly, eye to eye.

"You shocking little devil!" said John Hardy.

"Call me what you like. I will repay your insult by a compliment: you are a brave fellow."

"You will be strangled like a frog for this, Mr. Chinaman!"

"Whom by? All the Englishmen in China are dead."

"All?"

"Every one."

"A massacre?"

"A regular sacrament of death."

"But the Chinese believe in a God above, I think?"

"Pooh! not much."

"*You* do not?"

"Not I."

"And the white men of other nations, were they massacred, too?"

"All—all."

"But with what motive?"

"It would take too long to tell you."

"Ah! I know."

"You do?"

"Yes! I know! I know! I had a queer, dim idea long ago. Now I know! I know!"

"You are shrewd then, as well as brave."

"Yes! I know!"

John Hardy was in an ecstasy of discovery. He saw the skies growing black, black over the earth.

"Well, will you give me your cousin for my wife now?" asked Yen How, all wrinkles.

John did not answer. His brows were knit. It was only after a minute's thought that he made two steps forward, and laid his right hand on Yen How's shoulder, the doctor looking up into his face as he began to speak.

"Now, look you, Yen How," John said, "I know now, as I tell you, what your idea is like. Let me put it in plain words: you mean to sweep with this Chinese nation over Europe when our war is over, and Europe is made ready for your coming. I was a fool not to see it quite before—but that is it. And this idea is *yours*, yours only, Yen How: I see that. You have the face of a devil, you toad, you have! Well, I have got an offer to make you—a challenge—if you are man enough to accept it. Get me out of this—put me on board my ship, and I will undertake to fight you, and beat you. I alone, Yen, against you alone. If you beat me, I give you not my cousin, but the Queen's daughters for your wives. If I beat you, I squeeze the life out of your throat, you frog. I promise you that I shall breathe not a word of this plan of yours to a living soul—no one shall know from me: and no one shall know from me about the massacre, and the drilling of the people. I make you that offer, Yen."

John Hardy had recognised the great Mind in Yen How; now it was Yen How's turn to recognise the same in John Hardy. Here was the world-big Thought, the sun-kindled Imagination.

Yen How answered:

"Take your hand from my shoulder, my son."

"Well, what do you say, Yen?"

"I say that your thought tickles me, boy!"

"Is that all?"

"And I say, that if I were to accept your offer, you could go back to your ship saying to yourself: 'The great Yen How has recognised me as one of the two kings of the world.'"

"Still, I wait for your answer."

"How am I to count upon the silence you promise?"

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"Well, you know something of English life. I come of a family of English gentlemen. We never break our word."

"Well, come, we shall see. Your thought—what shall I say?—tickles me, my son. We shall see—come now. But first—do you know that I gave an order for your beheading? And then I said I would see you. Do you know why? I had a question to ask you."

"Well?"

"Have you lived in London?"

"Yes—sometimes."

"Ah, well—there is just a chance, then. Did you ever know a lillee girl called—what's her name?—Ah! Ada Seward?"

Yen How could destroy a world without the quivering of a nerve; but as he uttered this name in a whisper, he thrilled, and trembled.

John did not answer. The name sounded familiar. He hung his head with knit brow, thinking. Suddenly he blushed. He had remembered—the music-hall—the drunken night—Lottie Collins—Ada.

Yen saw the blush.

To this man, drunk with his passion, it was inconceivable that any other man could see this girl, and not straightway go mad for love. Men will sometimes get so intoxicated with wine, that the sober state becomes inconceivable to them; and they will say to a sober companion: "Oh, you *are* far gone, my boy!"

Yen saw the blush, and he noticed now that John Hardy's face was more than usually lovely, even for one of a lovely race. Would not Ada Seward love that face if she had ever seen it?

"You have seen her?" He half rose from his seat, and brought his mouth in an intense, secret, cunning whisper close to John's ear.

"I have," said John.

He had an instinct, even then, that he was running some frightful danger in making this avowal. But he was truthful in a very rigid, and rather old-fashioned sense. He had never told a falsehood.

"You have?—in real truth?" whispered Yen.

"I have."

"And—*kissed* her—eh, boy?"

The Chinaman's face worked. He hissed rather than spoke these words.

John grinned.

"Why, you queer Chinaman——!" he cried.

"You have!"

"What?"

"Kissed her—eh? eh, John Hardy?"

"Of course I have kissed her."

"Then you die!"

"What, for kissing Miss Seward?"

"You die, I say!"

"It was she who kissed me."

"You die! you die, you little white devil! you die! you die!"

Up went the fingers of Yen's right arm, twinkling in ecstatic wrath.

There was no mistaking Yen How. He meant this.

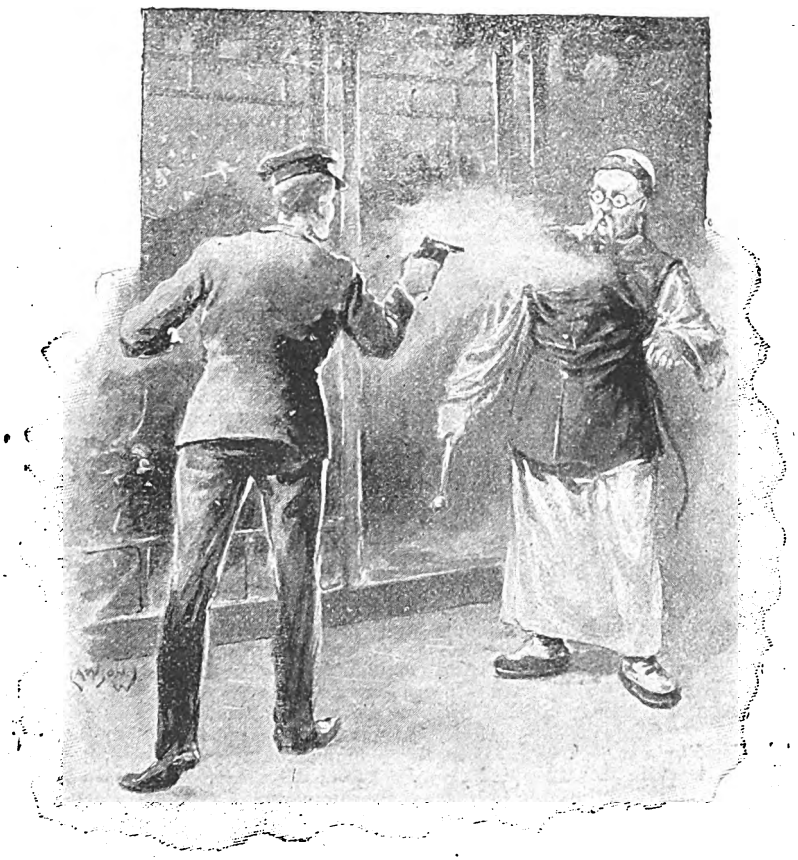
He pounded the gong twice with the hammer.

"In one half hour ——" he said, with a furious nod of the head at John.

John Hardy, perfectly cool, saw clearly that all hope for himself was lost. But he had no intention of leaving Yen How behind him to work his mischief in the world.

The second sound of the gong had hardly shivered and clanged, when John Hardy, with the revolver whipped from his breast-pocket, blew Yen How—passion, schemes, ambitions and all—out of existence.

In intention, that is—in absolute, cool unerringness of aim. The bullet struck Yen precisely over the centre of his heart. But it struck a plate of steel mail, and did not penetrate.



B ew Yen How out of existence.

John was about to fire a second shot at Yen's head, when suddenly the two men were locked in desperate conflict. Yen had flung himself upon John.

Yen's eye had long before noted the bulge of John's pea-jacket over the breast. He was half-prepared for what had happened.

The struggle was carried on with the entire physical force of the two combatants, the revolver being the aim of both efforts.

John, though below the middle height, was quite an inch or so taller than Yen; and he was able, with his left hand, to seize Yen's pig-tail, and draw it in a single coil tight round Yen's throat; while Yen inclosed the other's right hand and ribs in a grip of iron, squeezing with all his energy, and heaving and slanting his adversary in the effort to effect a throw.

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The physical force of the tough little Chinaman was quite two or three times that of the frail English lad.

This contest of strengths was a foreboding—and a resemblance—of the larger national contest which was impending.

John Hardy was comparatively weak. But in his right hand was a revolver, representing the Science of Western Civilisation, which, however, Yen's grip was rendering ineffectual; and in John's left hand was Yen's pig-tail, representing the barbarism, the superstition, the repulsive Soul of the East.

Yen's face darkened. A gurgling sound came from his swollen lips. The rat was being suffocated by means of its own tail. The West was strangling the East.

Suddenly the revolver went off, and the bullet entered Yen How's left foot. The Science of the West had uttered a cry.

But the West was breathing its last gasps under the stringent ferocious grasp of the East.

He fell at once flat on his back.

The contest was short, and it ended suddenly. A little spout of blood welled and rolled from John Hardy's lips; and at once he lost power and fainted.

Before he could fall to the ground, an attendant had come up, and struck him a blow on the brow with a heavy bamboo. He fell at once flat on his back, his face covered with blood.

Almost immediately Yen How was cool.

"Take him away," he said. "He has attempted my life—he must not be killed."

"The torture, Your Excellency?"

"Yes. But I will direct it myself. Go away."

He sat again, as the attendant lifted John in his brawny arms. He commenced once more to read the *Mercury*.

He knew that there was a bullet in his foot. But he would not move: the racking pain was sweet to him.

The intensity of the Chinese instinct of Vengeance is a mystery. It is not human—it is not bestial—it may be demonic. To us, at all events, it is incomprehensible.

To them pain is joy, if, at the same time, they can gloat over the knowledge that it is in their power to take a thousandfold vengeance on the causer of the pain. They hug their pangs—they wantonly put off the hour of their revenge—they roll in a secret luxury of malice.

In the matter of Torture, the Chinese have excelled all nations in a devilish cunning. They have investigated the nerves of man, and adapted their plagues to them with a nice and minute ingenuity. And Yen was more ingenious than the most ingenious.

He intended to give his mind to this matter. Meantime, he went on reading.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Vanished Fleet.

It was about twenty hours before John Hardy, in some absolutely dark place, again opened his eyes. At about the same time, the battle at which he had hoped and striven to be present was going forward.

For over a year the question which had been agitating many an English mind was this: Is our weight of metal in Chinese waters enough? Is it commensurate with possible contingencies? Is it not too hopelessly small?

This anxiety had been somewhat allayed by the spectacle of ship after ship of the British navy—the *Barfleur*, the *Bonaventure*, the *Hannibal*, the *Gibraltar*—steaming away in mysterious haste to the East.

On the other hand, they had not steamed away alone: they had followed—they had been followed by—a host of the choicest, mightiest ships of Russia, France, and Germany, all hasting Eastward, Eastward, as if in the sweep of some Law of gravitation, all with the same secret urgency, the same suggestion of mystery, and flurry, and design.

Heavy Russian armaments like the *Vladimir Monomach*, had hurried after French craft like the *Pascal*, and German craft like the *Gefion*. An addition of some 30,000 tons to her Chinese navy was made by Russia alone in her ships the *Rossiya*, the *Cissoi Veliki*, the *Navarin*.

This Eastern fever had infected even other nations, not precisely in the running. Away in the sweep of the Chinese Current went battle-ships from Italy, from Austria, from America.

In a few months the seas of the Far East were gravid with the navies of the world.

China, herself, by way of pantomime, had been building cruisers at the Vulcan Dockyards at Stettin; and at that very time was promenading the boulevards of the seas, quite like one of the *chic*, with the new *Hi-Chi*, *Hi-Tien*, and *Hai-Shen*.

The *Hi-Chi* had a speed of twenty-four knots an hour, and was a cruiser carrying an armament as heavy as many vessels of twice her displacement.

The fleet of Japan was in prime fighting order, exquisitely modern, as smart as it was swift and strong. It was worth any two of the fleets in Chinese waters put together.

Was Britain's weight of metal sufficient? This was the question.

The fact was, that Britain had ceased to be acutely anxious when it was once known that her weight was greater than that of any two of the other European nations combined.

She had added 37,000 tons, in round numbers, to her former Chinese squadron; Russia 36,000; France 11,000. But, all told, she had concentrated 126,700 tons in those waters, whereas Russia's total was only 83,000, and France's 26,000. It followed, therefore, that Britain had a preponderance of some 17,700 tons over these two.

This had seemed enough, considering that some of Russia's terra-cotta coloured ships were rather old-fashioned.

It was hardly remembered that there was Germany, too, with a weight of 27,000 tons in Chinese waters. Russia, France, and Germany together had a preponderance over Britain of nearly 10,000 tons.

The fact was sufficiently impressive in itself; but it had not been terrifying, even to those who remembered the possibility of the German element being hostile to the British, when they also remembered the splendid fleet of—Japan.

Here was an additional element of 200,000 tons—all on the side of Britain.

For was not Japan the friend and ally of England? Were not their interests identical? The Britain of the East, and the Britain of the West—how natural that they should stand shoulder to shoulder!

But there was one question, in connection with this queer, outlandish, yellow ally of England, the correct answer to

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which would have sent as great a shock through England, could she have known it, as she had ever received in her history. The question was this: "Where on earth, during the early part of April, 1899, did the Allied Fleet in Eastern waters get their supplies of coal from?"

We have already stated that England and Japan, by a clever deal, had, some weeks before, effected a corner in nearly all the Welsh and other coal in the East.

Yet on the morning of the 19th of April, the whole Allied navy, which some little time before had been almost immobilised for lack of steam-fuel, and which had been hiding and dodging, each ship for herself, all about the Northern Chinese coasts, now steamed gallantly past Quelpart in search of the British fleet, supposed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Chemulpo.

They were steering north-west; Nagasaki lay south-east of them; they were therefore coming from the direction of Japan. Could it be that it was from Japan that they had obtained this coal?

And where was the fleet of Japan? For two days Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Seymour had been expecting it, by previous arrangement, to appear off Chemulpo. But as yet it gave no sign.

The Vice-Admiral was not at first precisely anxious; for his only ground of suspicion that anything was wrong in China was the fact, reported to him at Hong Kong six days before, that absolutely all communication between that island and the mainland had mysteriously ceased. Yen How had cunningly left the Englishmen on Hong Kong alive, having no desire to have every Chinese port shelled by British guns. Hence, when the Vice-Admiral coaled and started northward hurriedly on receipt of a telegram from Tokio, stating that the Allied fleet had managed to procure some coal, and were steaming eastward upon Japan, he had no suspicion of the massacre. His reply to Tokio was that he was starting northward at once, and would avoid an engagement, if possible, until the junction of the two fleets was effected; and he instructed the Japanese fleet to join him at Chemulpo.

But at Chemulpo he received a slight shock. There was no white man in the place.

All he could suppose was that there had been a rising in the town, and that the white men had been killed.

But he hardly attached any political importance to the fact. Such things were common in China.

At first he waited on with perfect confidence for the appearance of the Japanese fleet.

The next morning he received a cable dispatched from Nagasaki to Fusan, and brought on two hundred miles on mule-back to Chemulpo. It was as follows:

"The Allied fleets, plentifully supplied with coal, are about to steam eastward in search of you. Japanese fleet will follow."

"Steam *eastward!*" "Supplied with coal?" "*Will* follow?" Certainly, now, if ever man was puzzled, it was the British Vice-Admiral.

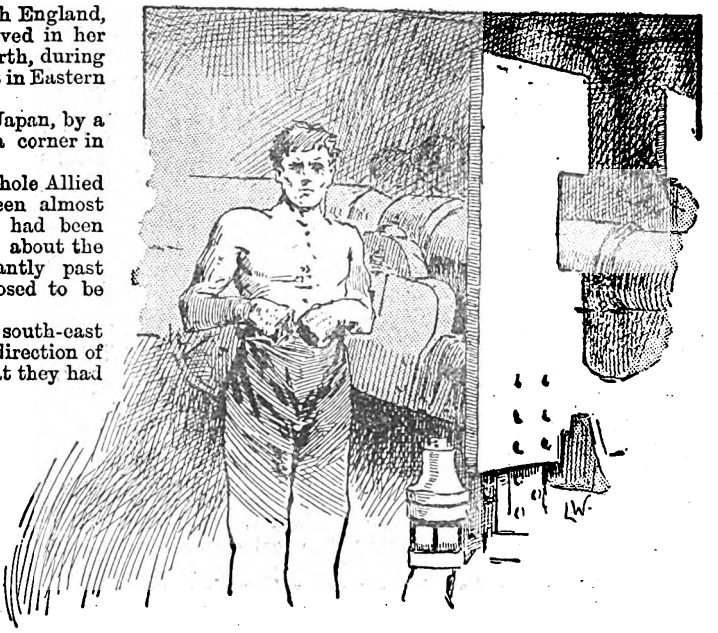
For if the enemy were steaming eastward supplied with coal, that meant Japanese treachery. But if Japan were treacherous, and had joined the Allies, why on earth did she take the pains to warn the British of their advance?

And why "*will*" follow? They should have set out, according to the Vice-Admiral's instructions, long before. If they had not already set out they were treacherous; but if they were treacherous, why did they give this warning of it, instead of taking the advantage of a surprise?

That they were not neutral, seemed proved by the fact that they were "following" at all.

The Vice-Admiral's brow was a heavy cloud of care. He decided that the cable was a hoax, and then that that was impossible, and then again that it was a hoax.

Suddenly he sent a small expedition of blue-jackets by road to Seoul to see who was there. They returned with the announcement that there were no white men in Seoul.



Belted his trousers with a determined snap.

The secret of Japan's action, though inscrutable, was this: She coaled the Allies in order that they might destroy the British; and she warned the British in order that they might destroy the Allies.

She helped both sides, being the enemy of both.

But this policy was too subtle for the British Commander to divine without an absolute clue.

The absence of white men at Seoul, as well as at Chemulpo, was merely an added shock. It brought no real light to the Vice-Admiral's mind.

Two days he spent in coaling the fleet out of four colliers which had accompanied him from Hong Kong, and in taking in stores from the store-ships. At the end of the second day, there was still no sign of the yellow ally of England.

The thing was so inexplicable, that wonderment could find no words. Japan was a nation among nations, civilised, responsible, presumably careful to keep her pledged word. What, then, could have happened?

"What, in Heaven's name, *has* happened?" said the Vice-Admiral to himself twenty times during the course of that terrible and sleepless night.

But he did not neglect the warning of Japan's cable. The next morning, immediately after the saluting of the colours, the fleet steamed from Chemulpo harbour, the flag-ship being the *Barfleur*, one of the only two line-of-battle-ships among the ships.

The Vice-Admiral had no intention of being caught at anchor without sea-room.

Up to the present, no hostile action had taken place in the far East. The approaches to Vladivostok harbour and Kiao-Chau were crowded with mines, and well defended by forts. The Vice-Admiral had preserved his fighting power from injury, till the first naval battle. After that, in the event of his victory, he would proceed to the capture of the hostile ports.

He went cruising south-eastward under half steam.

But what now is that, away yonder on the southern horizon? A long streak of grey mist, which has the property of growing swiftly broader and darker. The

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Japanese fleet at last, surely! No. It is the fleet of the Allied enemy. That is quickly determined by the look-outs.

They numbered twenty-nine, and occupied the whole region of the Southern hemi-horizon.

The British ships were thirty-three. Among them, however, was a very large number of smaller-tonnage craft, torpedo-boat destroyers, first-class gun-boats, second and third class cruisers, dispatch vessels, and sloops of war, of varying weight, from about 4,000 to as low as 260 tons. But there, too, on the other hand, were the great *Terrible* and her sister-cruiser (in whose books was the name of John Hardy, absent), the *Powerful*. These had each a tonnage of 14,200. There, too, were the *Revenge* with 14,150 tons, and the *Gibraltar* with 7,700.

The weight, on the whole, of the enemy was greater, but it was not much greater; and, even so, it was not the custom of Englishmen to count as a deterrent from battle a preponderance of the enemy in mere physical power. The Vice-Admiral banished from his mind for the time the mystery of the Japanese fleet, and sent forth his commands with a high heart, in which hope was uppermost.

Jack, below decks, belted his trousers with a determined snap, and prepared to sink, to fight, to swim, to die, to live.

Already from the conning-towers could be discerned the pea-soup colour of some of the Russian ships, though both fleets were pouring round the horizon two regions of dark smoke.

The British approached in a very wide wedge, the *Barfleur* leading at the apex of the formation, while the enemy maintained a double line, the whole of the first line being composed of Russian vessels, the ponderous *Vladimir Monomach* occupying the central post.

The barb, so to speak, of the British wedge was as strong as possible. On each side of the *Barfleur*, somewhat astern of her, came the *Powerful* and the *Terrible*. It was the intention of the Vice-Admiral to begin well, and to derive all the possible moral prestige which this fact might afford. At the moment when the *Vladimir* was two miles from the *Barfleur*, and three from the *Terrible* and the *Powerful*, the battle commenced on the British side. All the three British vessels had kept their forward barbettes trained upon the *Vladimir*, and they fired simultaneously. The result was just like magic. Before the smoke had cleared, the Russian ship was no longer on the surface of the waters. An instant afterwards the battle was general.

In the fury of warfare which now ensued, let the reader fix his eye upon a middle-sized, and comparatively unimportant ship, which stands far back in the starboard limb of the British wedge; she is called the *Iphigenia*—a second-class cruiser, tonnage, 3,600, horse-power, 7,000; not very wonderfully armoured, but capable of showing a clean pair of heels. On board of *her* is—Fate.

Yonder is the *Gefion*, engaged with the *Terrible*, and yonder, both the *Pascal* and the *Majestueuse* with the *Revenge*, and yonder again the *Barfleur* with the *Invincible*, and the *Powerful* with the *Mendon*. Wide is the war and various. The British wedge has penetrated the fleet of the Allies. The navies of the world are mixed together in a hotch-potch of combat.

There are instances, on one side and the other, of splendid manœuvring, of the right thing done at the right moment, of subtle skill. But these all are individual, between ship and ship, captain and captain. Neither on one side nor the other is there any wide plan, any grand plot, any omnipresent eye. On the whole, it is a question merely of weight of metal against weight of metal. The Great Man is not there.

* * * * *

Slowly, in his dark prison, the Chinese Iron is entering into the soul of John Hardy. He is being taught the meaning of Fear, and familiarity with the face of Pain. This, too, was necessary for him.

(To be continued.)

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AN OLD FRIEND BACK AGAIN.

In Mr. James Anthony Froude's book, "Oceana," published twelve years ago, the following passage occurs:

"What England would become was to be seen already in the enormously extended suburbs of London and our great manufacturing cities; miles upon miles of squalid lanes, each house the duplicate of its neighbour; the dirty street in front, the dirty yard behind, the fetid smell from the ill-made sewers, the public-house at the street corners.

"Here, with no sight of a green field, with no knowledge of flowers or forest, the blue heavens themselves dirtied with soot—amidst objects all mean and hideous, with no entertainment but the music hall, no pleasure but in the drink shop — hundreds of thousands of English children are now growing up into men and women. And were these scenes to be indefinitely multiplied? Was this to be the real condition of an ever-increasing portion of the English nation? And was it to be supposed that a race of men could be so reared who could carry on the great traditions of our country?

"I for one could not believe it. The native vigour of our temperament might defy the influence of such a life for a quarter or for half a century. Experience, even natural probability, declared that the grandchildren of the occupants of these dens must be sickly, poor, and stunted wretches, whom no school teaching, however excellent, could save from physical decrepitude."

Some five or six years after the publication of "Oceana," the Fresh Air Fund was started. Its object to an extent was to counteract the very evils of which Mr. Froude spoke. It is still going on. The number of children given a holiday in 1892 was 20,000; last summer that number had risen to 105,000.

Another summer approaches, and it is my pleasant duty to lay the programme before the readers of *S.S.*

But *S.S.* is always adding new readers, and, for the benefit of these, I will say here that the Fresh Air Fund was inaugurated for the purpose of giving poor children a day's holiday in the country, with plenty to eat and drink, at the small cost of 9d. each. This amount includes railway fare and two good meals. The only qualification is that the children are needy and in want of a holiday.

As before, the work of organisation is in the hands of the Ragged School Union, *S.S.* and its companion publications finding the money, and quite recently the Secretary of the Union, and a representative from this office, have visited each centre of population to which the F.A.F. has been extended, for the purpose of concluding arrangements for this year. The total number of places benefited now reaches twenty-five, including London. Gateshead and Dundee have this year been included in the list to the extent of 2,000 children each. Full particulars regarding the various committees and number of children in each town will probably appear next week.

The total number of children arranged for is 105,000. Of course, as many more than that will be given a treat as we receive money to pay for; but 105,000 is our minimum goal.

Each season is worked independently of another, the money received being used up entirely. But we have received £372 10s. during the winter months, so that we have a goodly sum with which to start operations.

To carry out the programme, £4,252 10s. will be required, so there is still a balance of £3,880 to be collected.

It remains for the generous-hearted readers of *S.S.* again to put their hands into their pockets and draw forth the "nimble ninepences." You can send nine stamps, and use another for the envelope—making tenpence in all. It will be nothing to you. But see what happiness you will give to a poor little boy or girl in one of our large cities! Remember every penny of the amount received in subscriptions is spent on the children, nothing being deducted for working expenses. These are borne equally by the R.S.U and "Pearson's."

I don't ask you to forward a large amount. I don't expect more from you than you can afford. I do expect that. It is in a manner your fund, and I want you to support it. The readers of *S.S.* are all one large family, with the editor at the head, and he pleads the cause of poor little outcast children who will have no holiday in the country unless the money comes to hand.

Don't withhold your mite because no excursions have been arranged in your town. At one time only London was dealt with. Then towns with populations of 250,000 were added. Now nearly every place with a population over 100,000 is included. So you see it may be the turn of your town sometime.

The Fresh Air Fund is a national institution, its ramifications extending every year.

Anyone who can help the movement by collecting amongst friends, can have a collecting sheet by applying for it at this office. These sheets set forth the objects of the collection, so that there is no need to explain the reason for asking for money. The sheet speaks for itself.

Now then, everyone of you see if you can't make this a record year. Every year since the Fund started the amount received has increased. Don't go back on what you have already done. *We must not go back.* The F.A.F. motto must be "Onward!"

All subscriptions will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly.*

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A Lucky Find.

Arthur Park, the artist, and I, had just had a good dinner at one of the best restaurants, and were buttoning our overcoats under our chins as we stepped out into the street, when a young fellow, bright enough as to appearance, but still wearing his summer clothes, almost ran into us.

"Why, hallo, Billy, old man!" exclaimed Park.

The other replied in a low tone, and Park drew him to one side. In a moment I heard my friend say. "Oh, that's all right, old man—any time, any time. Good night—look in at the studio some day."

He took my arm and we crossed the street to a waiting cab.

"Poor devil of an art student," he explained; "living on hope and faith in himself. Didn't ask for it, but I lent him a sovereign."

We stepped into the hansom and he added: "Have any troubles of your own when you first began to scribble?"

"I remember one morning fastening up my boots with bits of wire, not having the necessary capital to invest in a pair of laces," I replied.

The painter laughed.

"We have all eaten our share of mad cow, as they say in Paris," he returned. "Did I ever tell you of my little experience with certain neighbours once upon a time?"

"Never. Go ahead!"

"I can't make much of it, but I can give the facts. If you can fix it up into anything you're welcome to do so—story-telling is your business. Maybe my tale is a shade gruesome, and sometimes as I look back at it I think perhaps my action wasn't strictly honest, though I fancy it will pass muster in this world of sin. You see, it was this way:

"Bob Allan—he's in Florence now—read about his new picture the other day, didn't you?—Bob Allan and I were born in the same little Irish town. We both decided to be celebrated artists, so we went to Dublin to begin. Don't ever boast to me about your early poverty; we were poverty itself, personified, and stalking about like a pestilence. You may have wired up your shoes, but we didn't have any shoes to wire. At least, we had only a single pair between us, and when one went out the other had to stay in. In addition to that, they were too small for me and too big for Bob.

"Well, we found a place at the top of an old building which we thought would do for a studio. It was a big room, and we got it practically free because the owner couldn't rent it to anybody else. The building had been intended for business, not residential purposes, and our room had once been a printing office. The floor was deep in ink, grease, and general dirt; and the walls weren't much better. The printers had moved away because the building had got to be unsafe for their presses.

"We bought a second-hand bed, begged a chair, borrowed an oil-stove, and stole a soap box, and—there we were! Sometimes we had two meals, sometimes only one, but we kept at work."

"You had got along far enough in your art studies that you had work, then?" I observed.

"My dear boy, signs! Such work as that. And we weren't successful at them, either, because the regular sign painters could do better work. It was unsatisfactory business.

"We got on through the autumn pretty well, but when cold weather came, our quarters became rather cheerless. The windows were loose, the shutters banged, the skylight let in the snow, and the wind puffed up through the cracks and rat-holes in the floor. The rat-holes, by-the-way, were a great source of annoyance to us. I shall never forget how proud I was the day I bought a toothbrush. The very next morning Bob lost it down a rat-hole.

"What made it harder for us was the fact that there were a lot of fellows about our own age in the immediate neighbourhood who seemed to be enjoying all the luxuries of life. Right across the corridor from our door was another leading apparently into some suite of rooms where, strange to say, in the glimpses we caught of the interior, we saw heavy rugs on the floor, upholstered furniture, a well-stocked sideboard and all that sort of thing. We took it to be some peculiar club. The members didn't seem to come very much in the daytime, but used generally to drop in at about eight o'clock in the evening, and from then till midnight, or after, sounds of good cheer, not to say of conviviality, greeted our ears. We usually went to bed early to get warm, and left the wind which came up the rat-holes to fight it out with the snow which came down the skylight.

"Matters kept getting worse with us. We had great hopes of selling one of Bob's landscapes, but while he was carrying it to the probable purchaser, he got knocked down by a runaway horse and trap, and the picture was ruined.

"It was the day of the funeral of Paddy Laughlin, a famous policeman, and the horse had become frightened by the waving plumes on the hearse. We knew Paddy well enough.

"It was about two weeks after this that Bob and I were coming in together—having got another pair of shoes somehow—pretty well discouraged. It was near five o'clock in the afternoon, and the prospect for supper was about as poor as it could be. I had the key in my hand as we walked down the corridor. When we reached our door, on a sudden mad impulse, I inserted it in the door opposite. To my surprise the key turned and the door swung open. There was no one in sight so we stepped in.

"We found ourselves in a good-sized square room, furnished with a dozen easy chairs, three or four couches, a sideboard and a piano. There were rugs on the floor and pictures on the walls. In a small room on one side was a small safe containing chops, steaks, and other food, and in boxes was a lot of coal.

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Beyond was a door leading into still another room. We were surprised to find this empty with the exception of a table and a long, queer box standing on carpenters' saw stools. The floor and walls were bare, and the only other article of furniture was a wash-stand.

"I walked over, raised the cover of the queer box and looked in. Then I put it down, rather hastily I think. Bob started to follow my example.

"'Old man,' I said, 'I don't think you want to look in there.'

"'What's the reason I don't,' inquired Bob.

"'Oh, nothing much; but you don't. Just take my word for it.'

"'I wouldn't take your word for anything' said Bob; and with that he lifted the cover and looked in. He put it down without any great delay. Then he turned to me and said:

"'Paddy Laughlin.'

"I nodded. 'Medical students,' I added.

"'Yes,' returned Bob, edging towards the door. 'There was a mystery about the complaint which caused his death, you remember. They are trying to clear it up.'

"'Yes.' An idea had struck me, and I was doing some hard thinking. We passed out into the other room.

"'Come on,' said Bob, pulling open the door leading into the corridor.

"'No hurry,' I replied carelessly. 'Just unlock our door and leave it open.'

"'What are you going to do?'

"'Nothing much. Just take hold and help move these things over into our place.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'We need the stuff more than they do.'

"'What are you driving at? We'll be arrested.'

"'Hardly. There isn't time to answer your questions now. Come, the chairs first,' and I hurried one of them across the passage.

"Bob saw that there was nothing else to do, so he took hold with a will, and in ten minutes we had the chairs and couches transferred. Then we rolled up the rugs and snatched down the pictures. The sideboard and meat safe were larger orders, but we made them ours at last, with their entire contents; and the piano followed. We even took the table and wash-stand in the unfurnished room. Then we tackled the coal. This was pretty hard work, but with a scuttle and a big market basket we finally got the last lumps of it shifted. Then we closed and locked the door and went to work arranging the things in our own room, first astonishing our cold and forbidding grate with a fire. Things fitted nicely, and in half-an-hour they seemed quite at home in their new quarters. We were by this time famished, so we broiled a steak, opened a bottle of claret and proceeded to nourish ourselves. Then we each ignited a good cigar and lay back in two of the biggest chairs before the fire, while I explained to Bob my plan of future operations.

"The clock on the mantel, also part of the plunder, had just struck eight, and our cigars were about half finished when we heard a quick, active step coming along the passage. There was a pause at the door and the sound of the key in the lock, one or two doubtful steps on the bare floor within, and the striking of a match. A long silence followed.

"'He takes it hard,' I observed to Bob.

"'Rather odd that he should,' returned Bob, helping himself to another glass of wine.

"We could soon hear him wandering about from room to room and scratching matches as he lit successive gas jets, apparently that more light might reveal the missing furniture. We started fresh cigars, and Bob helped himself to another glass of wine.

"In about five minutes we heard other footsteps coming. There proved to be two of the newcomers, and as they stepped into the room they stopped suddenly, and there was total silence for about thirty seconds.

"We puffed noiselessly at our cigars, and Bob blew some smoke rings. Then we heard some conversation across the hall, not loud but deep. Other members arrived in rapid succession, till we estimated that some twenty or twenty-five must be there. It seemed as if they would wear out the floors stamping about, and by this time the talk had grown into a loud and angry Babel of voices. Still a certain pair of young men who had resolved to be great artists smoked on and settled back at a more comfortable angle.

"Suddenly the uproar ceased, and there was a long whispered consultation. Then there came a loud rap at our door.

"'Come in!' I responded.

"The door opened, and a big football player of a fellow strode in, followed by the whole crowd. For a moment they stood aghast. We folded our hands and smoked on. When the leader in a voice like a bull said:

"'Look here, you infernal tramps, what do you mean by coming into our place and looting it?'

"'Let's get at 'em!' 'Throw 'em out of the window!' 'Smash 'em!' came from his followers in angry chorus.

"'Do I understand you to say that we have got some of your things?' I inquired sweetly.

"'Some! You miserable thieves, you've got everything!'

"'Everything?'

"'Yes!'

"'Are you sure?'

"'Sure? Now you try once more to be funny, and I'll take you up and pound the floor with you!'

"'You say we have taken everything, eh?'

"'I do.'

"'You are mistaken. There is one thing which we didn't take.'

"'Eh?'

"'We left you one thing.'

"He looked at us. He knew the penalty for keeping that one thing. We smoked on. He turned to his companions and observed that their jaws had dropped. Then he looked back at us and said:

"'Come to think of it, that's the most important thing after all. We don't care for this stuff, do we, fellows? Just keep it. Sorry we have disturbed you. Good night!' and they all filed out like lambs.

"Bob uncorked another bottle, and we drank to the memory of Paddy Laughlin.

"The next day the medical students subscribed amongst themselves and refurnished their rooms. Come on, here we are at the theatre!"

"You say it has occurred to you since, that it was a bit like stealing?" I observed.

"Vaguely—yes. Though when we came to London in the spring we left the things behind. All we wanted was to be comfortable during the winter. I tell you, old man, it was a relief to get some rugs over those rat-holes!"

H. T. P.

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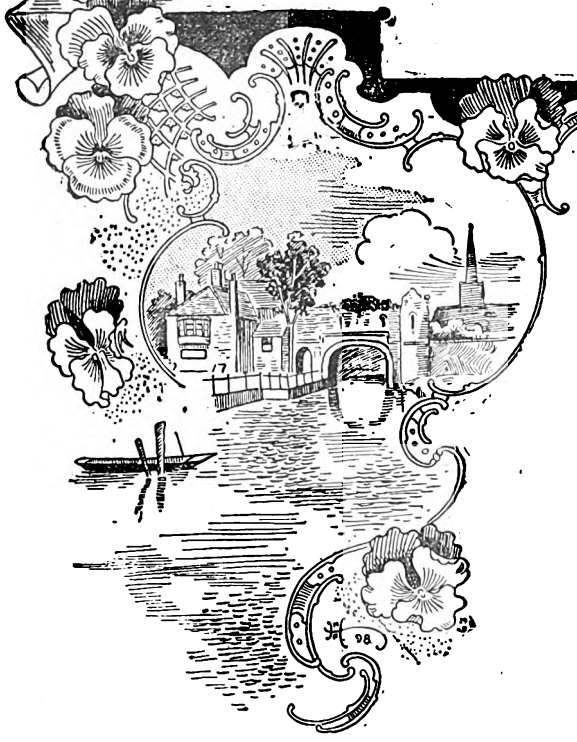
THE INVISIBLE PLAYER.



I COULD not resist lifting my eyes, with a twinkle of amused triumph in them, to Jack Belknap's face, as I gathered in the last trick and swept the cards together in a heap.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Jack, pushing his chair back, with a scowl on his handsome face; "that's the fifth game in succession you've beaten me, and you're the only man who ever did it, too. I don't understand it. But I'll whitewash you before long, you mark my words!" He rose, lit a cigar, and walked moodily out of the club.

Cards were Jack Belknap's passion—his weakness; the dear fellow had no other fault. Well might he be pardoned for loving a good game of skill—not of chance—with the mysterious pasteboards, and if it cut him to the heart to be beaten—well, what devotee of any honest sport cannot sympathise with him?

Although Jack is one of my best friends, I could not help feeling that he was desperately vexed with me when he went out of the club that night, smoking the only cigar I had seen him put to his lips for months. I ought not to have looked up with that mischievously exultant, self-congratulatory glance, I suppose. My triumph ought to have been accepted in the meekest, most carelessly undemonstrative manner. But then—Jack was such a famous card-player!

However, my friend was only vexed, and I knew his indignation, if he really felt any towards me, would soon wear off. So I went unconcernedly to the reading-room and sat down to read the papers until eight o'clock, when I was to take a train to Dover on business which would require my presence there early the next morning.

At a quarter past eight I hailed a cab, and was driven to the station. My train, an express, took less than two hours to do the run, and by half past ten I found myself in a cosy room at the M—— hotel, not a bit sleepy, and wishing that I had brought a good book to amuse myself until my customary bedtime, eleven o'clock.

I searched the room to see if there were not some discarded novel that I might dip into for an hour. But although I did not find what I was looking for, on opening one of the table drawers I was pleased and amused to discover a soiled pack of cards. Smiling to myself I drew them forth, counted them, and flung them down on the little toilet table.

"Now, Master Jack Belknap," I said, addressing my friend as an imaginary adversary, "if you aren't satisfied, we will sit down at this little table and play that series over again. I think that, if I play for you as well as myself, you will stand some chance of winning at least one of the games."

To complete the playful deception I placed a chair at the opposite side of the table, and dealt an equal number of cards to its imaginary occupant and myself.

"Now, Jack," said I, "if you will kindly excuse me, I will examine your hand first, and see what chance you have of doing something in this game."

Reaching over, I was about to gather up the cards of my imaginary opponent, when, to my utter amazement and terror, the little heap of pasteboards went up, precisely as if some invisible hand had grasped them; then, with deft rapidity, they were assorted in suits before my staring eyes!

For a moment, the chill of terror that had coursed down my spinal column when the cards were first lifted from the table fairly froze me to my chair, and I sat as one paralysed; then came an impulse to cry out, to flee from the room. I was on the point of making a dash for the door, when a card came jauntily and carelessly flying into the middle of the table. It was the invisible player's first move!

Then a new mood seized me. I felt a sudden, thrilling bravado, like that of a man who fancies there is a

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burglar in the house, and, lamp and revolver in hand, strides out to the passage, all pricking in his nerves, and walking as if on air. I would accept the invisible player's challenge, and fight out the game with him! It would be the experience of a lifetime, at any rate—a game of cards with a spirit!

Trembling with suppressed excitement and fear, yet with a firm grip on my nerves and with teeth clenched together like those of a man going into some fierce contest of strength or skill, I fixed my attention upon my unseen adversary's card and flung one from the same suit beside it.

Would the mysterious creature or power respond? I held my breath in expectancy. Yes; after a moment's pause, like the hesitation of a careful player, another card was detached from the hovering sheaf and cast upon the table. It was a good move, an intelligent move, as I perceived even in my excitement. There was surely a brain at the back of that invisible action. Unlike spiritual manifestations, there was nothing incoherent or disconnected about the "communication" this being had to make to me.

I gathered myself together and entered into the strange contest with all my mental powers alert. I determined that I would not think of the mystery confronting me—I would only think of the game and how I should play to win it. I bent my eyes upon the table and refrained from looking at the fan-shaped sheaf of cards suspended opposite.

Play followed play in rapid and determined succession. The game grew fascinating, absorbing. Hands were exhausted, tricks gathered, cards collected, shuffled, and dealt; and in all of these operations the invisible player did his part as promptly and as cleverly as I did mine. One—two—three games went to the ghost in relentless succession. I began to get vexed. Seldom had anybody taken three games from me in that fashion. I was determined it should not be four—but it was! Well, we would play the series out! I would win one out of the five. I glanced at my watch. It was one o'clock.

Grasping the scattered cards, I shuffled and dealt them again. The game began. It was the closest of all. Once the invisible player paused for a full half minute, after a play of mine had been made, and I studied his moves with equal care. At length, by a wonderfully brilliant and masterly play, after leading me upon an entirely false scent, my invisible adversary won!

I pushed back with an exclamation of anger, and in so doing overturned the little toilet table. It came to the floor with a bang, and the cards were scattered far and wide over the floor.

Getting down on my hands and knees, I gathered them up, and counted them. The pack was complete.

Then I righted the table, and replaced the cards upon it, saying: "Whoever you are, I challenge you to another series, the stakes to be as you please!"

There was no response. I dealt the cards. For five minutes I waited, watching the little heap of pasteboards opposite me. Then I rose, gathered up the cards, put them in the drawer where I had found them, and went to bed.

* * * * *

The next evening, having completed my business, I was back at my club again. Jack Belknap met me smilingly.

"Come, old boy," he said, "let's have another evening of euchre. I know I can beat you this time! I dreamt that I did it last night, and what's more, I dreamt just how I did it!"

"The deuce you did!" I exclaimed in amazement. "Well, come and show me how!"

Jack won the series in precisely the same manner, and exactly the same time as the invisible player who had vanquished me the night before. Then I told my experience to Jack. His cheeks glowed, and his eyes shone as he listened.

"Do you believe in the influence of the subjective mind over matter?" he asked.

"What nonsense is that you are talking?" I cried.

"I see you know nothing about it," he said, fingering his watch-chain thoughtfully. "But I have new faith in that wonderful theory. Whiteford, I was the invisible player!"

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W. F. Campton, 49 Upper Townsend Street, Belfast. "Trilby," by Geo. du Maurier. 6s.

Miss Mary Compton, 9' Sanson Road, Leytonstone. "Thelma," by Marie Corelli. 6s.

A. R. Ward, 13 Maria Street, Neath. Spon's "Mechanic's Own Book." 6s.

W. Hunt, 127 Edgware Road, W. "Exercise for Health," by H. H. Hulbert and Luis J. Phelan. 3s. 6d.

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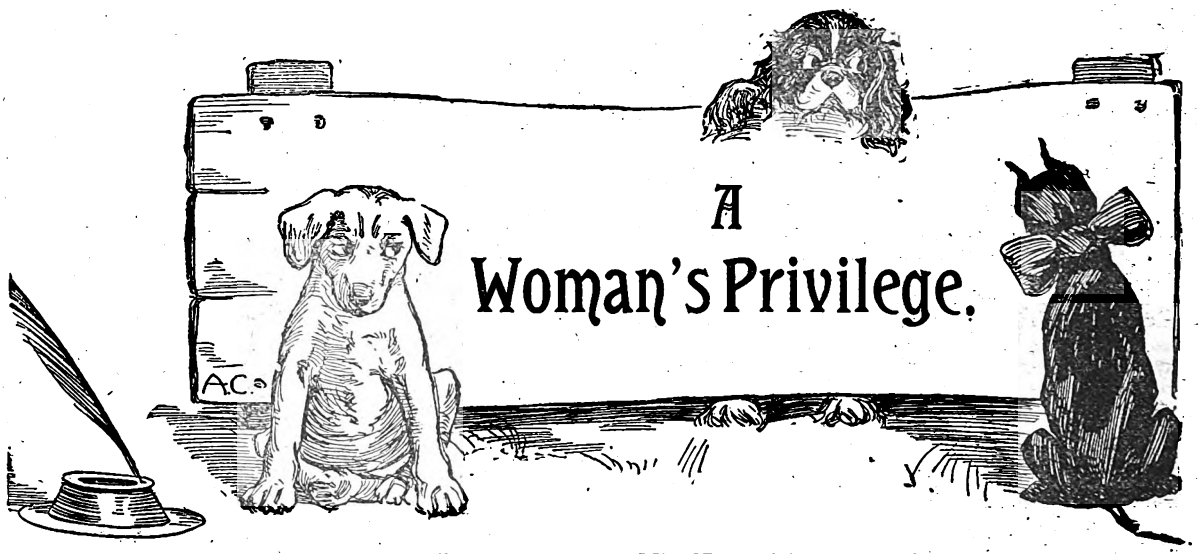

A Woman's Privilege.

"Who was that young man with you?"

Miss Nancy Armstrong asked the question of her niece Margery. Her tone was sharp, and her eyes had an angry look in them.

"It was John Markham," answered Margery quietly enough, as she took off her hat; but the tone in which the question had been asked brought additional colour to her cheeks and a sparkle of resentment to her eyes.

"I thought so," responded Miss Nancy, in her most irritating way. "Margery Armstrong, I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself."

"What for?" asked Margery. "I'm not aware that I've done anything to be ashamed of."

"Oh, you needn't try to plead innocence," retorted Miss Nancy. "You ought to be ashamed of going with that Markham fellow, and you know it."

"I don't know any such thing," answered Margery, facing her aunt bravely. "John Markham is a respectable young man. You don't like him because there used to be trouble between the Markhams and the Armstrongs. That happened before either of us was born, and there's no reason why we should keep up the quarrel. If we see fit to like each other, I don't know who's going to prevent our doing so."

"I am," answered Miss Nancy grimly. "You needn't think—and John Markham needn't think—that a penny of my property will go into the hands of any one of that family!"

"You can do just as you see fit about your property, of course," said Margery. "I haven't anything to say about that, but if you think anything you can do will prevent John and me from liking each other, you're quite mistaken. He doesn't want your property, but"—with the prettiest little blush imaginable, and a softening of the voice at the import of the words—"He does want me."

"Margery Armstrong! I should like to know how far the matter has gone," cried Miss Nancy, in wrathful surprise. "To judge by the way you talk, one would suppose it is all settled between you!"

"It is," answered Margery, with eyes that never flinched before the angry ones of her aunt. "I promised John to-night, coming home from church, that I'd marry him as soon as he has a home for me."

Miss Nancy fairly gasped for breath.

"You're a silly," she said, as soon as she could command her voice, "to take up with that fellow when you might marry the squire's nephew!"

"I wouldn't marry the squire's nephew if he was the last man on earth," said Margery. "Compare him with John Markham, and I know that down in your heart you can't help owning that he is an insignificant apology for a man.

"All you can see to admire in him is his money, I'm sure, and if he had a thousand times more than he has, I'd have just as much contempt for him as I have now."

"You may see the day when you'll wish you had some of his money," said Miss Nancy. "Wait till you're John Markham's wife and poor as poverty, and things will look different. Of course, he thinks, and you think too, that I shall change my mind when I find out that I can't prevent your marrying him. But you were never more mistaken in your life. Marry that fellow and I'll see that not a penny of mine goes to you."

"Please yourself about that," answered Margery. "We don't want your money. We're both strong and willing to work, and we'll get along. Don't worry about that."

"That sounds well, but you will sing a different tune by-and-bye," said Miss Nancy. "Just remember what I say."

Margery went up to her room, not to think about what her aunt said, but about the things she had talked of with her lover as they walked home from church together.

One day Miss Nancy decided to go to town to do some shopping. She was always afraid of being too late for the train, and generally arrived at the station long before it was due. She did so on this occasion, and as the day was a very warm one, she sat down on the platform in the shade of some large boxes that had been unloaded there, thinking it more comfortable there than in the stuffy little waiting room.

Very soon she heard steps on the platform, and presently voices from the other side of the pile of boxes reached her ears.

"How is your matrimonial project getting on?" was asked by one of the unseen parties.

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A voice which Miss Nancy recognised as belonging to the squire's nephew answered:

"It seems to hang fire just at present. The fact is, the girl's got another string to her bow, and the chances would be against me if it wasn't for the fact that her aunt favours my suit, because she thinks I shall get uncle's money, and she would like to unite the two properties. So I'm rather sweeter on the aunt at present than I am on the girl. If I get the girl at all it must be through the old lady's influence, you see.

"The girl's a little daisy, but the aunt—well, she isn't a daisy, you can be sure of that! It's a question if having her in the family wouldn't be paying a dear price for all her property, but, you see, there's a chance of being able to shake her off after a little.

"I happen to know that a new railway line is going through this place, and the company will have to buy a piece of land she owns, and this land she intends to give to the girl as a wedding present. Now as soon as the line is put through—and it's sure to come—this land will be worth more than all the rest of the old lady's property. If the girl gets a deed of it, and I get the girl, I can sell it to the railway company and make a good big sum of money out of it, and we shall be independent of the aunt, and when that happens, if it ever does, I'll tell her to look out for her own affairs and I'll look out for mine. I am taking care that she does not find out about the new railway scheme. I want to make sure of the girl and the land before I break the news to her."

Miss Nancy listened with ears and eyes very wide open.

"Yes, when it happens, if it ever does," she chuckled. "I don't believe you will ever get the chance you are looking for, my smart young man! I don't suppose I am a daisy—I never thought I was!—but I rather fancy I'm a match for you, since I know what to do. I don't believe you will have to shake me off. I think I'll do a little—or most of the shaking."

Just then the train came along, and Miss Nancy got in without being seen by the young men.

As luck would have it, she met the squire's nephew at the station.

"If you're going home you might walk along with me and help to carry some of my parcels," she said, in a very pleasant manner. "I'm tired out. I've been seeing to a good deal of business to-day. I have had a deed made out, giving Margery the south forty acres of the farm, and I've been pricing carpets and furniture and finding out how much it's going to cost to set up a young couple in housekeeping. Of course, they won't need the things just yet, but I thought I would get some idea of what the expense would be!"

"They—who do you mean?" asked the young man in bewilderment.

"Why, Margery and Mr. Markham, of course," answered Miss Nancy. "Who else should I mean?"

"You don't mean to say that you intend to let your niece marry that fellow!" cried the squire's nephew in surprise and consternation.

"Why, certainly," replied Miss Nancy, as if she had never had any other idea. "He is a nice young man. He's got brains, and when he gets Margery he will get money, for the new railway will make the land I've given to her worth a snug little fortune."

"I'd like to know how you heard about the new railway," cried the astonished young man.

"Oh, I keep myself posted on such matters," said Miss Nancy, looking very wise. "But here we are at my gate. Thank you for carrying my parcels. Won't you come in?"

"No, not to-night," was the gruff reply, and Miss Nancy chuckled as the young man went his way.

"I think I've got even with you," she said, nodding her head after his retreating figure. "I expect he was about as much surprised as Margery will be."

Her niece had seen her, and came out to meet her and help her with her parcels.

"Margery, I've got something to tell you," said Miss Nancy, anxious to have the matter disposed of. "I've thought it all over, and I don't know but you are right about John Markham. It is foolish to let an old grudge stand in the way of young folks' happiness. So I have changed my mind—that's a woman's privilege, you know—and I have concluded to let you do as you think best. I've had the south forty made over to you by deed. And when John gets you he will get that too, if you see fit to turn it over to him. It's yours to do just as you please with."

"Why, Aunt Nancy!" cried Margery, looking at her as if she felt sure she had gone crazy. "I thought you would never consent to our marraige!"

"Folks change their minds sometimes," said Miss Nancy. "There! there! Don't hug me so or I shall drop this parcel. I hear a whistle down the road that sounds like John's. You'd better go and tell him the news, and by-and-bye, after I've had a cup of tea, bring him in to see me."

KATE ROGERS.

W. T. STEAD INTERVIEWED.

The Greatest Living Journalist Speaks to the

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THERE are certain eminent people in this country to catch and interview whom is considered a triumph by the lynx-eyed interviewer. Mr. Gladstone, for instance, Anthony Hope, Mario Corelli, and Mr. William T. Stead.

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THE RIVAL QUEENS.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE RETOLD FROM THE FRENCH BY MARY FERMOR

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, and on the way confesses his love for her.

CHAPTER V.

The Captive Queen.

In the large, straggling garden which surrounded the Abbey St. Martin—with its smooth lawns, lofty trees, and countless flowering shrubs, with its quaintly-cut hedges and brilliant *parterre*—walked a woman, still young and beautiful, with a sweet, sad face, and slow step, followed at some few paces by two dark-robed, stern-featured nuns.

They had just emerged from the shade of the cloister, and were descending the moss-covered steps that led to an unfrequented part of the grounds, and while the veiled nuns walked with the unbending rigidity required by their order, their young companion seemed to gain fresh life and vigour from the sweet-scented evening air.

She might have been a few years older than Eve. Her beauty, though developed, had lost none of its freshness, and in spite of a certain resemblance between the two, this fair, pensive recluse had a Royal dignity of bearing wholly wanting in the simple grace of the younger girl.

Here in the shade of the ancient Abbey, with no sounds to break the stillness but the chanting of the monks and the sweet singing of the birds, Ingeburge of Denmark, the lawful wife of Philip Augustus, and the rightful Queen-Consort of France, was wearing out her young life in a hopeless sorrow—smitten by the hand of him she had already learnt to love so well, and spurned by the husband who had sworn to cherish her.

As she wandered on, her spirits revived somewhat; she smiled to herself, and drew in her breath as if even there it was good to be alive on that sunny evening, and at last her steps quickened into a run when she reached the soft, dewy grass.

The nuns coughed ominously, and Ingeburge checked her pace, remembering she was at once Queen and captive. Still the voice of awakening Nature brought a sense of comfort, almost a promise of better things.

Suddenly, she darted forward, giving a cry of joy, and as she ran, her long fair hair became loosened, and fell over her white dress far below her waist. The horrified nuns followed as best they might, exclaiming:

"Madame! Madame!" in tones of bitter remonstrance.

They found her kneeling on the grass, with a bunch of tiny blue flowers in her hand.

"See!" she said, with tears in her deep blue eyes, "see, my sisters! You must pardon me, but I could not help it when I saw that my 'vennen' were in flower."

"And what does that signify?" began one drily.

"What? do you ask me that? Do you not know that these are the first flowers that bloom on the Castle terrace

Followed at some paces by two dark-robed, stern-faced nuns.

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at home, in Copenhagen? It is the flower of remembrance, the flower of my native land! Ah, my poor blossoms," she murmured, pressing them to her lips, "you look frail and you hang your heads, for you are in exile, like me! France has not been kind to either of us!"

Half-an-hour later the Queen was sitting on a stone bench, talking to the aged Prior Anselm, a man of venerable appearance and kindly manner, while the two nuns waited at a respectful distance. The priest had just received her confession, and was now trying to console her with words of hope and comfort.

"Is there anything that I can do to lessen your sufferings, my daughter? Tell me, and I will do it if it lies in my power."

The Queen coloured slightly.

"They tell me that in a distant part of the Abbey you have a hospital for sick men, is it so?"

"Yes, they have told you rightly, my daughter."

"Then grant me your promise, father, and let me spend part of my useless life in helping to nurse the poor sufferers. I should not then waste my time in vain regrets."

"You, the Queen!"

"If I were the Queen in very deed, I should have power to help those who are in want and distress, but here I can do nothing but tend them with my own hands."

"But, my daughter, there are often contagious diseases among our sick folk."

"And if I died thus, should I not have cause to bless France, which, though denying me an earthly crown, gave me that of the Holy Saints?"

The prior looked at her with admiring reverence, and said, as he raised her hand to his lips:

"You shall have your will, my daughter, you shall tend our sick; but if Heaven hears my poor prayers, your brow shall wear the Crown of France before it is encircled by that of the Saints."

"Is there nothing else you desire?"

"Oh, yes," she replied quickly, and began to tell him how she longed for some one to talk to unreservedly, a girl near her own age, who could share her feelings, and not frown at her like those cold, grave women, whose hearts had been crushed under the load of unnatural discipline.

"The King's orders are absolute, my daughter. He would not allow it," said the old man sadly.

At this moment there was an unwonted stir in the great cloister, which was hidden from the prior and Ingeburge by thick clumps of trees, but neither of them paid any attention to the sound.

She continued to plead that he would use his influence with the King, and he listened with a heavy heart, for he knew how unbending Philip was in all that concerned his neglected wife. At last she ceased, and as he laid his fatherly hand upon her head, with an unspoken prayer, her tears fell thick and fast.

The noise increased, footsteps and angry voices came nearer, and the prior listened in wonderment. Then a clear young voice was heard above the rest, calling:

"Angel, my sister Angel, where are you?"

Ingeburge awoke as from a hideous dream and listened, not daring to believe her ears.

"Am I going mad?" she murmured.

The voice, still repeating the same words, seemed to be going farther away, when Ingeburge pressed her trembling hands to her eyes for a moment and then, as if yielding to some irresistible impulse, she cried:

"Here, Eve, my sister Eve!"

There was a rustling of leaves, the branches were thrust aside and a young girl, dressed in white like the Queen, sprang out from the shade and clasped the latter in her arms.

It was indeed little Eve, who had doffed her male attire

Clasped the latter in her arms.

and now stood laughing and crying in her speechless joy at the reunion with her beloved Princess.

The Queen looked long and lovingly at her, holding both her hands as if fearful of her disappearing as suddenly as she had come.

"My little Eve, my sister, how is it that I see you again, and *here*?"

"It has cost me much to reach you," said Eve at last, in their native tongue, "but I bless Heaven for it all, now that I am with you once more, my Queen and sister."

The two nuns now came forward and one laid her hand on Eve's arm, saying harshly:

"What does this woman want? We have strict orders that no one is to speak to the Princess of Denmark."

Before the prior could speak, Ingeburge drew herself up to her full height, and said with chilling dignity:

"To the Queen of France, you mean."

"My daughter," gently interposed Anselm, "you know the King's orders."

"But," said Eve, pulling out a parchment from her dress, "I am here by order of the King."

The nuns smiled incredulously, and even the old prior looked doubtful, as Eve handed him the letter, which Ingeburge seized in passing, and kissed the royal signature even though she ignored its import.

"The girl says truly," he said when he had read the parchment. "His Majesty has appointed her to be the the Queen's attendant."

The nuns withdrew crestfallen, and the hostile body of monks, lay brothers, and servants who had sought to oppose Eve's entrance rapidly disappeared at a sign from the prior.

Before he left them the old man laid his hand in blessing on Eve's young head.

"You have a tender, faithful heart, my child, and I pray God you may bring comfort to our dear Queen."

He kissed Ingeburge's hand and moved slowly away.

"Eve, my dear child, how can I ever thank you for this? It is the first gleam of happiness that has come to me since I entered these gloomy walls, and it is you who bring it to me! How you have grown! I left you a mere child, and now you are nearly a woman, and beautiful, too, my little sister," she added caressingly.

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"And you, Angel, are changed, you are pale and sad, but still my beautiful Princess! He must be blind not to love you!"

"He is my husband and my lord, and I love him, Eve, so speak of him as if he loved me, for my sake."

"And who dare say he does not love you? The gipsy Agnes has bewitched him, all Paris knows that, but the King said to me to-day: 'Queen Ingeburge is holy—Queen Ingeburge is beautiful!'"

"The King said that of the wife he has shut up here? Oh, Eve, do not cheer me with false words!" she said, trying to withdraw her hand from Eve's close clasp.

"I have so much to tell you, Angel, that I hardly know where to begin, but, believe me, that even to save *you* my lips could not utter a lie."

The Queen and her peasant foster-sister sat down on the old stone bench, and the latter related all that happened in the old home and on the long journey, up to that morning's ride with Albret. The Queen listened with deep interest and emotion, but the naïve recital of Eve's talk with the page brought a smile to the sad face and a word of warning to her lips, which, however, fell unheeded, as most such words do. The girl told how she had been taken to the Louvre and had recognised their benefactor, the knight "Dieudonné," in the powerful King of France.

"He was alone in the vast room, unarmed and bare-headed, walking up and down in deep thought. In my confusion I looked round for Albret, but he was not to be seen, so I was alone with the great Philip Augustus. For a minute or two he took no notice of me, then he stopped and signed to me to come nearer. My knees shook, but I managed to go down on them before him. He looked vexed and said:

"'Did Albret tell you anything?'

"I swore to him that nothing but my own instinct had told me his high rank, just as one realises the presence of God in church."

"Eve, Eve, that was almost blasphemy!"

"The King did not seem to think so, for he smiled, and I wanted to please him for your sake, Queen Angel, so I knelt on, forgetting my boy's dress, till he called me 'Maître Adam,' and then I started and got so red that he laughed outright and said:

"'I see you don't know how to tell lies yet!' I was trying to find an answer, when he added kindly: 'Come, child, it is no use trying to deceive me. The King knows *all*.' I felt so ashamed, for I had known him as a friend in trouble before I knew him as a king, and so I should have trusted him, for I had still his purse of gold in my vest. 'My daughter,' he went on gently, 'I guessed your secret the moment I saw you in your brother's arms, where you come from, what you have come for, and even that they say your brother carries a dagger for my breast, as well as his trowel; but, child, I do not heed such tales—one dagger more or less matters little to me.' He said this all so calmly; there was no boast in it, only courage. Surely his heart can know no fear!"

"Yes," cried Ingeburge gratefully, "there is no knight so brave as my lord!"

"Then he asked me: 'Should you be very happy if I told you to go and see this Princess Ingeburge, whom you love so dearly?'

"I told him how I had travelled on foot through all those weary months in the hope of obtaining such a boon, and when he asked if I were of noble birth I told him I was only fit to be a queen's waiting-maid."

"Ah," said Ingeburge reproachfully, "even you did not dare to say *the* queen."

"No, my sister, I dare not thwart the King when I wanted such a favour from him, so he smiled, and patting my cheek said, in a joking way: 'Well then, Maître Adam, you shall be your Queen's page and begin your duties to-day.' I forgot all fear and even proper respect, for I seized the King's hand and kissed it again and again. He did not seem at all offended, but went on to say: 'I see you are a good girl, and you do well to love that saintly and beautiful woman, who bears her unmerited sufferings with so much resignation.'"

Eve paused, for she saw that her last words had caused her companion's tears to flow, but they were tears of gratitude, not bitterness, so she continued:

"As I was leaving the room the King said: 'Your brother has nothing to fear from me. I am not suspicious of those who love Queen Ingeburge. And, as there are always evil tongues ready to talk, remember that if anyone tells Ingeburg of Denmark that I believe she has hired the Syrian assassin, tell her, from me, that I know it for a base lie.'"

This was the first whisper that had reached Ingeburge of her lord's danger, and all else became as nothing at the thought of it. She questioned Eve eagerly as to his guards and friends. Were they faithful and to be trusted? Eve thought of that "friend" she had heard bartering life for life on the road to Paris, and Montruel's words seemed to ring in her ears with fateful sound.

"Did the King say ought else?" inquired the Queen at last.

"The King?" said Eve starting out of her painful reverie. "Yes; he told me to announce to you that you would receive a visit from him to-night before sunset."

"Child, child, why did you not tell me that before anything? To think that I am to see him, my lord, my husband, this very night! I have never seen him since we were parted at the altar steps! But I must be ready for him. Come and help me, we will bind garlands of these blue flowers in my hair, for I must please Philip, my King."

The Queen's eyes were shining with loving anticipation, her face was flushed and her whole being instinct with life and longing; but Eve's eyes were dimmed with unshed tears, and her heart was heavy with a dark foreboding. There was one thing she had not told.

Just as she made her last obeisance to the King, the form of a dark, beautiful woman had entered the room and in a hard, haughty voice had said to Philip:

"You shall not go!"

CHAPTER VI.

A Visit to Notre-Dame.

The sun had set, and Ingeburge waited with the blue flowers fading in her sunny hair, and hope still struggling to live in her heart, but the King never came.

An hour earlier, a brilliant cavalcade of knights and noble dames had ridden from the Louvre along the right bank of the Seine towards the city. Madame Agnes had conceived a sudden desire to see the Cathedral, and she was now going there with her suite, accompanied by the proudest barons of France, including the Duke of Burgundy himself, all transformed into obsequious courtiers by the iron will and ready wit of Philip Augustus.

On one side of Agnes de Méranie rode Amaury Montruel, magnificently dressed and splendidly mounted on a spirited Cordovan jennet, which he managed with the perfect ease of an accomplished horseman.

Many a muttered curse followed them as the simple citizens saw this woman with her insolent beauty vaunt her ill-gotten splendour before the world, and there were those who whispered that the King was deceived both in the woman he had made his wife and the man he called his friend.

On her other side rode Herbert Melfast, Lord of Pevensey, whose jewels might have vied with those of the richest shrine; and, far behind in the crowd, was seen the tall form of Tristan de Pamiers bestriding an ancient war horse, in company with Maître Samson, whose shambling steed possessed ears long enough to point to a somewhat ignoble ancestry.

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As they turned on to the great bridge, Amaury bent down and whispered to Agnes, pointing to a tall man with a mason's hammer on his shoulder:

"A smile for him, madame, if you please, he is the Master of the Freemasons, and his men follow him like sheep."

Madame Agnes smiled sweetly to order, and graciously waved her hand to the man in question. Maitre Honore blushed like a girl, and lifting his hammer above his head, raised a cheer for Queen Agnes!

"Thus easily do you gain all hearts!" sighed Montruel languishingly, but Agnes paid no attention to him. She knew he was her slave, and that she need waste no smiles to keep him in her toils, so she directed her blandishments to the apparently stolid Melfast, whom Montruel had advised her to captivate; but she went to work with such eagerness that it was not long before he regretted his disinterested counsel.

By a dexterous manœuvre Tristan now managed to bring himself into prominence, and as Montruel caught sight of him, he said:

"Another smile, madame, for that is the mighty King of the Basoche!"

She cast a quick, contemptuous glance at the pale, shabby youth, but her face was wreathed in smiles, and her dark eyes shot captivating gleams as she passed him a second later.

Tristan rose in his stirrups, waved his cap in the air, and made the air ring with his lusty cheers. The cry was taken up on all sides by masons and students alike, and Madame Agnes, flushed with victory, continued her triumphal progress, smiling as directed, and winning favour with every smile. She was too clever a woman to attach one iota more value to this cheap enthusiasm than it deserved, but it was only a means to an end. She was out on business, not pleasure, that fine spring evening. Her instinct had told her that during the last eight-and-forty hours an indefinable and, to her, dangerous change had come over Philip Augustus. She knew that, however strong her fascinations were, they would never entirely subjugate him, for his head was stronger than his heart, and his will stronger than his passions.

Agnes de Méranie was haunted by the thought of her rival, the rightful Queen, who rose before her mental vision day and night as an avenging angel, till she had sworn that Ingeburge should no longer live to torment her. The object of these smiles and some judiciously-distributed crowns, supplied by Montruel, was to range the mob on her side, so that they might with more vehemence denounce her unfortunate rival. Every cheer was a fresh blow aimed at poor Ingeburge, who was even now waiting for her faithless lord.

As the party neared the precincts of Nôtre-Dame the crowd became denser, as it was the workmen's supper-hour, and the usual horde of beggars increased at this time of day. All eyes were turned on the brilliant train, and jeers and jibes were soon heard directed against her, who, in their eyes, was no more than the King's favourite courtesan.

"She has stolen the King's money for herself and her gipsy kinsfolk!" shouted one.

"Jewess! Gipsy! Arab witch!" sounded on all sides.

"She has shut up our poor young Queen in a dungeon!"

"In a black dungeon guarded by priests!"

"What is the use of building churches, when we have to live and die like heathens because of that sorceress!"

Between these imprecations were heard cries of "Cheers for Queen Agnes!" but they were soon lost in the growing buzz of discontent, till Agnes herself turned pale and Montruel looked round in search of a way of escape. Their situation was getting desperate. They were separated from the rest of the company by the excited crowd, who were closing in upon them with threatening gestures and angry looks. Smiles and blandishments were of no use here. These men were terribly in earnest.

On one side of Agnes de Méranie rode Amaury Montruel.

Our friends Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux were among the most vociferous, and their sense of the unequal division of wealth in this life lent additional ardour to their moral protests.

Tréfouilloux suggested ducking Agnes in the river, and Ezekiel, catching up the idea, shouted with all his might:

"To the river with the hussey!"

"To the river! To the river!" yelled the mob.

"Madame!" gasped Montruel, "you are a prisoner here, you must pay ransom."

"Then empty your purse, my lord," she said tartly.

He had not expected this, but he obeyed, nevertheless, and the crowd fought for a few minutes over the contents of his purse. As usual, our two deserving sufferers were unfortunate, so Ezekiel pressed forward and shouted:

"A diamond, Agnes! Give me one of your diamonds!"

This was again taken up clamorously, and it seemed as if they would drag the woman from her saddle.

"In the name of Heaven, madame, do not refuse them, there is not a moment to be lost," urged Montruel.

Contrary to all his expectations, she showed no unwillingness, but proceeded to divest herself of every ornament she was wearing, and throwing them among the seething mass, said graciously:

"Take them all, my friends, I brought them for you."

But Amaury Montruel got nothing.

This unexpected largesse naturally caused a hand to hand fight among the crowd, and while this was going on Agnes and Amaury made their way to the Cathedral.

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"Ugh!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "That would have cost me thirty thousand crowns if I had not had the happy thought to leave my real jewels at the Louvre."

"What?" he asked incredulously.

"Those dirty wretches are quarrelling over bits of glass and tinsel not worth half a scu!"

When they entered the cathedral they were met by the Bishop and his attendant clergy. Madame Agnes nodded unceremoniously to Maurice de Sully, for she had not been told that he was of any use to her, and, in fact, the good man paid little heed either to the King's matrimonial difficulties or the Papal interference. His whole mind and thoughts were absorbed in the building of Nôtre-Dame, whose growth he watched with reverent tenderness. Every completed arch was, to him, a prayer granted; every sculptured saint a pledge of divine approval.

"These are for Dilah, your beloved."

There was one person present, however, upon whom Agnes was told to smile, and that was his eminence the Bishop of Orvietto, who was deputed by His Holiness to inquire into the marriage question once more.

She advanced towards him with well-feigned humility, and bent to kiss his hand, saying as she did so:

"I have heard so much of your exalted virtues, my father, that I have come here expressly to crave a blessing from one of earth's greatest saints."

The Legate's heart swelled with pride, though he spoke with lowered eyes and deprecating voice:

"Alas, my daughter, I am but a poor sinner!"

"Kneel to him and the man is ours!" whispered Montruel.

She knelt, and his white hands were extended above her bowed head; but surely, bestower and recipient alike, had little to do with the blessing.

This little episode served to raise her spirits, and she went through the unfinished nave making pretty speeches to the Bishop, though she thought the whole place looked an ugly mass of dirt and confusion.

At last she turned to the priests and said:

"Most reverent fathers, may I not be permitted to see the foreign sculptor who is at work on the figure of Blessed Mary?"

No one replied at first, and there was an embarrassing pause.

Since the day when Jean Cador rode to the Cathedral in majestic silence on his beautiful horse, followed by two negro slaves bearing his tools, and neither vouchsafing look nor word to the enthusiastic crowd who welcomed him, no one had dared to enter his temporary workshop.

He had been conducted to it by two deacons on his arrival, and had then expressed a desire that his privacy might be respected. As the sound of mighty blows were heard from the mysterious shed, men and women crossed themselves, and prayed that no harm might come to their church and city from this dark-skinned stranger and his uncanny black slaves.

Even the Bishop hesitated to disobey Jean Cador, for if he should throw up the work, who could be found to complete what the greatest sculptor of the time had begun?

However, Madame Agnes would take no refusal, and soon the Legate joined his entreaties to hers, so that the Bishop had to yield.

He pointed out the narrow staircase that led up to the place where the shed had been fixed over the great door where the statue was to stand in future, but gravely asked them to excuse his accompanying them. Agnes could hardly conceal her delight at this last stroke of fortune, and with a special smile of recognition to the Legate she hurried off with Montruel.

Mahmoud-el-Reis was sitting on a low stool with folded arms and bowed head. His thoughts were very far away, and the blows that the two negroes were dealing out to the, block of marble that was to become his masterpiece, failed to disturb them. On the rough wooden partition was an exquisite chalk sketch of a lovely woman in whom, perhaps, the earthly element overshadowed the divine, and whose beauty was that of the East, unchastened by the power of the Cross. It was very beautiful, but it was not Christian art.

The name of Dilah was hovering on the Syrian's lips, and it was Dilah's image he had transferred to the wall beside him.

For some seconds the two intruders stood unnoticed on the threshold, and Agnes looked admiringly at his picturesque form.

"His arms are strong," she said. "And has he promised?"

"He has promised."

"How are you going to pay him for it?"

"That is my secret," said Amaury, changing colour.

"But how will he get into the Abbey?"

"That is his secret."

"He neither sees nor hears us. But what is the name he keeps muttering?"

"The name of Dilah, whom he loves."

"Well, wake up your fine son of the desert; I have kept something from that rabble for him."

"Mahmoud!" said Montruel aloud.

The Syrian turned his head slowly, and let his eyes rest upon the two for a few seconds in silence, and the negroes ceased their work at the sound of a voice. Then he spoke:

"What do you want, and why do you bring that woman here?"

"She is the wife of the King of France," replied Montruel.

"The Queen?" he asked slowly.

"Yes, the Queen," put in Agnes in a firm voice.

The Moslem showed no sign of surprise, but rose quickly and whispered to Amaury:

"This is my house, and we never soil our dwellings. I will not kill this woman either at this time or in this place."

The possible consequences of this mistaken identity made Montruel feel sick at heart, so he answered hastily:

"This is not the one! I told you of Ingeburge of Denmark!"

"Ah, I understand! So this is her rival who has come to see if my eye is steady and my arm strong."

"Hush!" began Montruel, but Agnes interrupted him:

"I love the King, and this woman would steal his heart from me. You are right, Mahmoud-el-Reis, that is what I came here for!"

The Syrian turned from her with an air of revulsion, but her frankness pleased him better than duplicity would have done.

"So you love the King?" he asked with a strange intonation. With one of her most seductive smiles, she now drew out a string of pearls, and, extending her hand, said:

"These are for Dilah, your beloved."

His calmness seemed to forsake him for a moment, and

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there was almost an expression of fear in his eyes as he raised them to hers. His glance fell, and he held out his hand, into which she dropped the shining gems.

"I thank you," he murmured.

As they were making their way with some difficulty down the steep staircase, Agnes exclaimed triumphantly:

"Another conquest!"

"Ah, my Queen, you have but to wish, and the whole world would be at your feet!" was the passionate answer.

Mahmoud-el-Reis remained standing where they had left him, with the shimmering pearls in his bronzed palm. He sent his men away to fetch his horse, and turned, in the fading light, to Dilah's picture.

"That woman has looked at Dilah; her lips have spoken Dilah's name, and it sounded like sacrilege in my ears."

He moved to the window and examined the pearls.

"That woman is beautiful, and the pearls are costly. Why do I despise them so? And why do I hate her?"

He opened his hand, and the gleaming white pearls fell to the floor—and he slowly crushed them to powder with his heel.

"As she looked at Dilah, I seemed to see my dear one frown, and hear her voice say: 'Have nought to do with this woman and her gift.'"

He threw his rich mantle round his shoulders, and crossed the little room, treading under foot again as he did so the little heap of pure white dust—and such was Madame Agnes' latest "conquest."

Mahmoud-el-Reis left Notre-Dame, and, mounting his beautiful steed, rode away unattended out of the busy city.

(*To be continued.*)

It is a little more than three years since I received a letter from my most intimate friend and college chum George Clymer, inviting me to his nuptials, which were to take place in two weeks. Clymer was a promising young lawyer in London; I was practising medicine in Glasgow. We managed to meet at least once a year in one or the other of these places, and we corresponded vigorously meanwhile.

I said I had received a letter from Clymer. I have it before me as I write. I looked it up on his particular request that I should destroy it. But this is a digression.

I wrote my friend, in reply to his invitation, that it was impossible for me to be present on the interesting occasion (there was a serious epidemic in Glasgow at the time, and I could not afford to quit the field, even for a few days), and sending him my earnest congratulations on his approaching happiness. I felt convinced that the union between him and Miss Wandell would be a happy one, from all I had heard of the young lady, although I had never met her. She was an only child; her father was wealthy. It was known she had rejected suitors who, from a financial standpoint, would be regarded by the many more eligible than Clymer. He, on the other hand, was a "rising" young man, with a good practice, and considered by mammas as a desirable match for their daughters. Everything, therefore, seemed in accord.

Two days after the wedding was to take place I received the following note from my friend. It bore no date and no address within. These were the words:

"It is off—irretrievably off. Never allude to the subject to me, or to any human being by word, sign or correspondence, as you value our friendship. Destroy—George."

The note took my breath away. I did destroy it on the instant, but I have quoted it correctly, word for word.

When Clymer and I met again, we met as we had always met. I need not add that no allusion was made by either to what had happened. Our close intimacy continued as before, and I tried to fancy that my friend was the same fellow he had always been. But let that pass.

I have said this was something more than three years ago. It was early in June last that I received another letter from Clymer, which led to my looking up the first one I have alluded to. The letter was brief—I may say abrupt. It informed me of his marriage that very day, and contained a cordial invitation to come directly to his house on my next visit to London, which he knew was to be in the following month.

I confess I was taken a good deal aback by this announcement. I replied at once, and while declining the invitation to become his guest, I assured Clymer that he could count on me as a constant visitor. The fact is, I was curious first to understand the position of affairs which had so suddenly converted Clymer into a Benedict.

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Well, I went to see him at once on my arrival. I was introduced to his wife. I was charmed with her. I was forced to stay to dinner that very day. Everything went off delightfully. Clymer was a *connoisseur* in the choice wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy, and I never drank finer than on that occasion.

As the conversation became prolonged, Mrs. Clymer left us to ourselves to continue it. I felt there was something wanting to give additional zest to the "finish." My eye, perhaps, glanced over the table with an inquiring look.

"You are wondering at the absence of the fragrant Havana?" said my friend.

"Frankly, that is so," I replied.

"We will now," said Clymer, "talk of the past. The interdiction is removed, and I will tell you why I have not touched a cigar for all these years, nor suffered one in my house.

"When my first engagement took place, there was but one thing in which my own tastes were not agreeable to my *fiancée*. I was very fond of a cigar. She detested it. I at once yielded, and declared that I would never touch a cigar again.

"Nothing could exceed the felicity which we enjoyed. The wedding-day was fixed, as you know. It was to be celebrated at the church. Then a wedding-breakfast at the house of the bride, after which we were to start upon our honeymoon.

"It was very late before I retired on the previous night; I had so many little things to arrange in my house. In fact, it was in the early hours of the morning before I got to bed, and then I was so much excited that I could not sleep. I arose early and finished all my little arrangements. My man, Somers, served a delicious breakfast at nine. I sat at the table, thinking over everything for an hour. I went to my library. On the top of a little bookstand was the empty cigar box that had stood there for many months. I took it down to throw it in the waste-basket. What devil prompted me to raise the lid I do not know, but I did raise it. There was just one cigar left.

"I had nearly two hours, and nothing with which to occupy myself. The same demon whispered: 'It is a pity to throw away that fine cigar! Smoke it.' And I did smoke it!

"I sat in my armchair enjoying its fragrance till it was finished, and carried away by a dreamy atmosphere of reverie, I fell into a profound slumber.

"I was roused by a knocking at my door. It was my faithful Somers, who said: 'I fear you may be late, sir; it is very near twelve!' I started, looked at my watch, and, great Heavens! it lacked but five minutes to the hour. Fortunately, the church was not very far off, but I could not reach it in five minutes on foot. I seized my hat and rushed into the street, not hearing the voice of Somers, who called emphatically after me. A cab was fortunately passing. I jumped into it and was driven with furious speed to the church. I had saved my distance, and as I got out the clock was striking twelve. My best man was waiting for me at the church door.

"'Good Heavens, Clymer!' he exclaimed, 'what is the matter?'

"'Don't stop here talking,' I replied. 'I am in time.'

"I took his arm to walk with him up the aisle. Our friends had mustered in force. Everybody had turned to look at us, and, as it seemed to me, with a curious significance. My best man, in fact, quietly disengaged his arm from mine and walked a little in the rear. As we reached the altar, several persons rose to their feet, and I could hear a little faint tittering from several parts of the building. I hastened towards my bride. She turned indignantly away. Her father came up.

"'What means this mummery?' he said.

"I was dumfounded, entirely incapable of utterance My best man whispered in my ear: 'Don't you know what you have on? Look at yourself.'

"I did look, and without a word rushed madly from the church and into the carriage destined for a different purpose, and was driven to my house. I locked myself in my room. I believe I swore and raved. When the paroxysm was over I became cool. I gave Somers some special orders, and I wrote that short note to you.

"I have still to give you the explanation. Before taking my breakfast I had dressed myself elaborately, so as to be quite ready for the ceremony. When that diabolical cigar caught my eye, and I had yielded to the temptation, I took off my wedding coat and hung it in my wardrobe, putting on at the same time my smoking jacket, a variegated garment, which had been in disuse for several months. When roused by my man, and when I discovered that I should be late at my wedding, my brain was on fire. I thought of nothing but how to reach the church in time. It may appear incredible to you that I did not observe what I was wearing, but I tell you the literal truth.

"I never made any attempt at explanation or apology. I knew it would be useless. My friends did undertake it, as I afterwards learnt, but in vain. Why should I have violated a solemn promise to my *fiancée*, and that on my wedding day? Why, indeed?

"The young lady and her father went abroad, and remained absent for more than two years. I took my summer vacation across the Atlantic; then came home and settled down to hard work. This is about the whole of it.

"And yet," said Clymer, after a pause, "perhaps you can guess who the lady is that sat at the head of the table?"

K. B. R.

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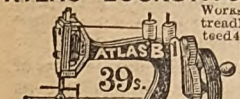

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MR. CLAUDE CARTER, of Thorn House, Johnstone, N.B., says: "Your Tablets much reduced my weight and I have been waiting to see if it was permanent, and so it has proved."

MR. CANHAM, 87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, says: "Tablets cured my wife two years ago of extreme stoutness. It has never returned."

MARION TAYLOR, of Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "Have lost quite two stone."

A. PEEL, of Darley Hydro, Matlock, writes: "They have reduced and benefited me a good deal."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than one stone."

MR. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead. "I think them wonderful not only to reduce fat but as a medicine."

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

WADE'S

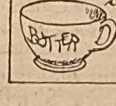
WONDERFUL OFFER

A SOLID SILVER WATCH GIVEN AWAY.

SEND NO MONEY.

In order to introduce my name into every household in the Kingdom, I undertake and guarantee to give away one of my "**World-Famed £2 Silver Watches,**" list price, Ladies' or Gentlemen's, to every reader who sends me the correct reading of the Rebus printed below. I am preparing to send out immediately 2,000 of these watches. This is a perfectly genuine competition, and the only thing you have to do is carry out the conditions, and if you succeed in guessing correctly you have the advantage of our truly wonderful offer.

These pictures represent three well-known English Wild Flowers. The conditions of the Competition are that you find out what these flowers are, and if you are correct you undertake to purchase one of my inexpensive Solid Silver Chains. These chains are the best made, are marvellous value. Money returned if dissatisfied. Send at once, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope, so that I may inform you if correct.



W. W. WADE,

WATCH MANUFACTURER,

Dept. 35, **GOLD EXCHANGE,**

Hammersmith, London W.

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ON THE BEST AUTHORITY.

Good-for-Nothing has received an invitation to a dance. Unfortunately, he does not dance, but as he says, "He would like to go just to see the fun," but he does not know whether he ought to accept the invitation under the circumstances.———— There is no reason why you should not accept the invitation, but you certainly should at the same time inform your hostess that you are not a dancer, in order that she may make her plans accordingly.

Camera.—There are three factories in the United States which together consume a total of nearly 2,000,000 eggs a year in the manufacture of the peculiar kind of paper known to photographers as albumen paper.

John K.—Your idea on the relative value of the crust and crumb of bread does not agree with the conclusions recently arrived at by a French scientist. For persons in good health, he says that the crust is greatly superior to the crumb. A similar statement was made by a scientist nearly a quarter of a century ago. For people troubled by their digestive organs, he says further, the crust should be eaten to the exclusion of the soft portion of the loaf.

Murphy.—The average annual value of the potato crop in the United Kingdom is £12,000,000.

Liber has some old books which he intends to put up for sale by auction. This makes him curious to learn when the first book auction took place in England, and he naturally comes to me to supply the information.———— The first book auction in this country of which there is any record was in 1676. Prefixed to the catalogue is an address to the reader saying: "Though it has been unusual in England to make sale of books by auction, yet it has been practised in other countries to advantage." The seller was Dr. Searman. For general purposes this method of sale was hardly known till 1700.

Lover of Fruit writes: "We have frozen meat; why can we not have frozen fruit?"————Fruit does not take kindly to freezing; the cells of the fruit are ruptured by refrigeration to the necessary extent, and decay sets in.

F. C. H. wants to know if gold is always the same colour.————No, indeed. An experienced man can always tell from what part of the world a piece of gold comes from by its colour. The Australian gold, for instance, is distinctly redder than that from California. Again, the gold obtained from the "placers" is more yellow than that which is taken directly from the quartz.

L. T. would like to know if Paris is really a cleaner city than London, as people sometimes say.———— It depends upon the point of view from which you regard the subject. The streets of Paris are swept every morning by 2,600 male and 600 female scavengers, divided into 149 brigades, and may be said to be cleaner than the London thoroughfares. But in the matter of general sanitation London is preferable.

Lex.—Yes, it is a curious fact that Freemasons are to be met with less frequently among lawyers than in any other profession.

Unbelieving says that a friend tells him that certain people live on clay; he would like to know whether this is so or not, if I can tell him.———— Yes, I can tell you; we keep information of every kind piled up in this office. In Alabama there are many persons whose daily food is clay dug up from the banks of the small mountain streams. They enjoy good health and live to a ripe old age, but they are thin and spiritless, and always look ill. That clay contains nourishment of some sort is clear, as they live almost entirely upon it. The most marked effect of the diet is the change in the complexion of the eater; the skin becomes sallow, then turns to an unwholesome yellow, almost the colour of the clay itself.

B. A.—The largest collection of coins is that in the possession of the Vienna Public Cabinet of Antiquities. There are 125,000 pieces of money in that collection.

P. W.—Clean water is a luxury in Venice. The inhabitants have to depend upon the rains for their supply. There is no company for supplying the city. The water for drinking and domestic uses is collected in subterranean reservoirs, where it is said to be filtered. It is doled out at the public wells, which are open one hour daily for that purpose and then are carefully locked up.

Alec intends to learn to play some musical instrument, and like a shrewd Scot he desires to operate on an instrument which will give him the best chance of earning money. "Everybody affects the cornet and violin," he writes, "so there is not a great opportunity of making money out of those. Can you tell me the name of an instrument, the players on which are scarce?" In brass bands, good trombone players are much in request; comparatively few persons learn to play it. In string bands, harp players are the most scarce.

Trotter.—If you care to make a pilgrimage to Valladolid in Spain, you may find the house in which Columbus died. Small respect is paid to this relic of the past, however, its present use being as a cow stable.

N. A. L. thinks of touring in Russia shortly, and asks me to give him particulars of the small things he should provide himself with in order to avoid inconvenience.———— That is too large an order for this page, but I may tell him that in most cases the small hotel proprietors do not furnish bed-clothes. They would as soon think of giving you a second-hand tooth-brush. They would not dream of giving you sheets and similar articles that had been used, even though washed, and they would not give the things you had slept in to a second party; consequently it would not pay to supply them. They do provide a bedstead, but the traveller often wishes he had brought his own, until he gets accustomed to the Russian bed.

C. C writes to ask if horses of any particular colour are stronger than others.————Grey horses are supposed to be capable of greater strength and endurance than those of any other colour. So much so, that only grey horses are used in the Russian artillery.

M. H. and P. T. wish me to settle a discussion between them as to whether physical or mental labour is the most exhaustive to the body.———— According to medical authorities, three hours of close study wear out the body more than a whole day of physical exercise.

A Would-be Reformer writes to complain of the ambiguity caused by the use of the same word "line" both for an entire railway and also for each separate track. He suggests that it would be a great improvement if the expression "track" were adopted in England as it has always been in America.————You are mistaken, W.B.R., in supposing that the English railway vocabulary is deficient in this respect. Although the ordinary man in the street might, in his ignorance, refer to a particular track as a "railway line," a railway man would call it neither a "line" nor a "track," but a "road."

M. P. B.—The original folio edition of Shakespeare (1623) is valued at £1,200. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts owns a copy, for which she paid £1,600.

POSTAL RATES.

Short Stories will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

One Year	6s. 6d.
Half Year	3s. 3d.
Three Months	1s. 8d.

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A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.

GIGANTIC CLEARANCE SALE.

£50,000 worth of Goods Offered at Half Price.

THE ENORMOUS STOCK OF CARPETS, CURTAINS, SHEETS, BLANKETS, QUILTS, &C., MUST BE CLEARED WITHOUT REGARD TO COST, OWING TO THE L.C.C. REQUIRING PRESENT PREMISES FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS.

New Premises having to be acquired by us, this Sale is held in order to Clear Out Heavy Stocks previous to the removal. NEW GOODS have to be sacrificed, together with all Regular Stocks, as it would be almost impossible to remove the Valuable and Heavy Stocks to New Premises without great risk and loss by damage to the Goods in transit, and this renders AN ABSOLUTE CLEARANCE IMPERATIVE. The magnificent opportunity is therefore afforded the readers of *Short Stories* of buying the NEW SEASON'S GOODS that are just coming in fresh from the looms at prices lower than the cost of production; and in many cases the Goods are being offered at less than HALF PRICE.

This Offer Will Not be Repeated.

ALL GOODS WARRANTED ABSOLUTELY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. Money Willingly Returned if not Approved

4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 48in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed.

7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d.

Lot 2.—7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. per pair, measuring 3½yd. long, by 52in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges and handsome double borders; wash easily. 3 pairs for 11s. 3d. Money returned if not approved.

10s. 6d. Lace Curtains for 5s. 11d.

Lot 3.—Specially handsome Drawing-room Design, entirely new and most successful. In white or cream, with scolloped and taped edges, made from thoroughly sound cotton yarns; warranted to wear well. Sale price, 5s. 11d. per pair. Each Curtain measures 3½yd. long by 60in. wide. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 17s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths,** made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.

Size 54in. by 45in., price 1s. 2d. each, or 3 for 3s. 3d.
Size 56in. by 56in., price 1s. 5d. each, or 3 for 4s. 0d.
Size 62in. by 62in., price 1s. 11d. each, or 3 for 5s. 3d.
Size 68in. by 62in., price 2s. 2d. each, or 3 for 5s. 11d.

10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.

Lot 24.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

25s. Special Heavy Blankets for 14s. 9d.

Lot 23.—25s. Special Heavy Witney Yorkshire Blankets for 14s. 9d., measuring 75in. by 90in. Manufactured entirely of pure long staple wool, bleached by the sun and beautifully white. Give endless wear, and are easily washed. For perfection of finish, durability, and economy, they are unequalled. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 42s. Money returned if not approved.

WITNEY BLANKETS.

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE.

Lot 24.—800 pairs of best quality Witney Blankets, with fancy borders, very soft, warm, of great durability. Made from the best wool, and warranted to give every satisfaction. Prices given below are little more than half the original cost.

Size	Weight.	Price per Pair.	3 Pairs for
53in. by 70in.	4lb.	6s. 3d.	18s.
60in. by 80in.	6lb.	7s. 9d.	22s.
70in. by 90in.	8lb.	11s. 6d.	33s.
75in. by 96in.	9lb.	13s. 0s.	37s.
80in. by 99in.	10lb.	15s. 3d.	43s.
86in. by 104in.	11lb.	16s. 9d.	48s.

9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.

Lot 30.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 84in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed.

15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d.

Lot 31.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 80in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved.

3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d.

Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned

10,000 RUGS

GIVEN AWAY.

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Lot 50.—**THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER** is made to the readers of *Short Stories* only. On receipt of Postal Order for 6s., or 74 stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6 genuine SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS**, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and **large enough to cover any ordinary sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company BELOW THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained Direct from our Looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits.

GIVEN AWAY.—WITH EVERY CARPET WE SHALL ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY A VERY HANDSOME RUG TO MATCH; OR WE WILL SEND TWO CARPETS AND TWO RUGS FOR 10/6.

MONEY WILLINGLY RETURNED IF NOT APPROVED.

THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match; a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.

Lot 60. No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9 0	by 6 0	5/6	9/0
2	9 0	by 7 6	7/0	11 9
3	9 0	by 9 0	8/6	13/6
4	10 6	by 7 6	8/9	13/9
5	10 6	by 9 0	10/0	15/6
6	12 0	by 9 0	11/6	18/0

Lot 60. No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12 0	by 10 6	13/6	20/6
8	13 6	by 10 6	15/3	24/0
9	12 0	by 12 0	15/3	24/0
10	13 6	by 12 0	17/0	27/0
11	15 0	by 12 0	19/0	32/0
12	18 0	by 12 0	22/9	36/0

These Carpets are splendid imitations of real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. All designs are registered, and deservedly considered works of art. We can confidently recommend them for use in the dining and drawing rooms, or any rooms and landings where hard wear is a necessity.

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As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories* we have decided to give away to every purchaser a very handsomely-woven Hearthrug, 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, to match carpets in colours, etc.

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DEAR SIR,— 9 Bedford Row, High Wycombe, Bucks.

I have seen some of the Carpets and rugs sent by your firm, and think they are really a marvel. Please forward goods as follows, etc.—Yours faithfully, Rev. F. H. MAY

"SHORT STORIES" COUPON.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. for amount we guarantee to send any goods as above.
THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR MONEY WILLINGLY REFUNDED.

All Orders despatched same day as received. Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, and crossed UNION BANK. ADDRESS:

THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING COMPANY, Sale Dept., 31 OLD STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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Ask for it and See that you get it.

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LONGEST ESTABLISHED. PUREST & BEST.

Invalids, as well as those in health, may enjoy drinking this Tea without the least fear of the injurious effects which so frequently result from using other Teas.

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Price 2s., 2s. 3d., 3s., & 4s. per lb. 3lb. and upwards Carriage paid. Terms—Cash. Sample lb. 2s. 4d.

Invalids' Tea.

The Tea of the Future.

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Entirely New Process.

G. WILLIAMS, Tea Merchant,
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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 483. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 2ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

CADBURY'S

COCOA is COCOA,

and **COCOA** ONLY.

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It is specially suitable **FOR** all times and all seasons.

It is most nourishing for the **YOUNG** building up the growing body.

For breakfast, supper **AND** all times.

The ideal drink for the **OLD** repairing the waste incidental to life.

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—*Medical Magazine.*

The Analyst says—"CADBURY'S is the TYPICAL COCOA of English Manufacture."

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CADBURY'S ABSOLUTELY PURE **COCOA**

"Its food value is double that of Bread made from ordinary wheaten flour."—Lancet.

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will not only help to improve your digestion and consequently your health, but will also bring back that energetic and happy feeling of good health. Man does not live a natural life, so a good portion of a natural food, in the shape of HOVIS, at each meal will largely counteract the bad influence that modern life has upon the health and digestive organs. This is not an idle remark, but a proved statement, daily being verified.

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Tower Coffee.

Tower Cocoa.

IN PACKETS AND TINS ONLY.

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The Best Hair Dye

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Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

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NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 188B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Road, N.; 9 High Rd., Kilburn.

WADE'S

WONDERFUL OFFER

A SOLID SILVER WATCH GIVEN AWAY.

SEND NO MONEY.

In order to introduce my name into every household in the Kingdom, I undertake and guarantee to give away one of my "World-Famed £2 Silver Watches," list price, Ladies' or Gentlemen's, to every reader who sends me the correct reading of the Rebus printed below. I am preparing to send out immediately 2,000 of these watches. This is a perfectly genuine competition, and the only thing you have to do is carry out the conditions, and if you succeed in guessing correctly you have the advantage of our truly wonderful offer.

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W. W. WADE,

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Hammersmith, London W.

DR MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL SOAP

Prepared with Arsenic, Zinc, and other Ingredients as a beautifier of Skin and Complexion, 6d. and 1s.

Madame PATTI says: "Most Excellent."

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Of all Chemists, etc., or post free from S. HARVEY Ltd., 5 Denman Street, London Bridge, S.E.

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"JUNO" CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

DIAMONDS from £10. 16/8 monthly. JUNO Lady's or Gent's' Safety £12 12/- 21/- monthly. £14 14/-, 24/8 „ £16 16/-, 28/- „ Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, sent post free to any part.

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO. LTD., 75 and 76 Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.; and at Piccadilly Circus, exactly opposite the Criterion, London, W. *N.B.—Every JUNO Guaranteed.* New JUNO Riding School, 1,700ft., now open.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

No. 483.] For the Week ending April 2nd, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

The Widow's Experience.

MRS. HANNAH BATES—Widow Bates, as she was generally designated—was one of the most prominent inhabitants of the straggling village of Hayling. She lived in a four-roomed cottage on the outskirts of the village—just off "the street"—and her orphan niece Susie, a young woman of twenty-one, resided with her.

There was probably no man or woman in the world who did more good in proportion to his or her means than Widow Bates; the poor of the district blessed her from the bottom of their hearts, and the inhabitants generally were loud in their praises of the good-natured woman.

Aunt and niece were seated in the narrow porch enjoying the cool of the evening and pleasantly occupied in discussing the weightier matters of the day.

"Did you hear that Sir Henry's new steward was to arrive to-day, aunt?" asked Susie.

"Yes, my dear," replied her aunt. "I wonder how long *he* will suit? The Baronet is very changeable and suspicious; why, he won't let anyone receive rents for him, but has everything paid over into his own hands! Oh, well, it's no business of ours!"

Susie was about to make a remark when her aunt uttered an exclamation.

"My!" And she leant forward to look down the road. "Who's this coming?"

Susie glanced along the dusty road, and saw the figure of a middle-aged man, dressed in black. The stranger quickened his steps as he caught sight of them; he was evidently coming to pay them a visit.

"Mrs. Bates?" asked the stranger as he reached the gate. He raised his hat and looked very affable.

"Yes, sir."

"My name is Welkin—Horatio Welkin."

"Oh!" inwardly ejaculated the widow. "What a name!"

"I have come to act as steward to Sir Henry Bence in Hayling," continued the new comer, "and I am anxious to find a suitable apartment until other provision is made for me. My tastes are simple and my wants few. I should like a bedroom in a house where I can be as one of the family. An elderly man, with a slight limp, told me that I should find what I wanted here."

"Ah, that was old Newsome," returned the widow. "Yes, sir, I have a room to let. Would you like to come and see it?"

Mr. Horatio Welkin said he would, and glanced approvingly at Susie as he followed Widow Bates into the house.

The room was suitable, as were the other arrangements proposed, and the inclusive terms came within the prescribed limits. The bargain was struck, and the new steward was quickly installed as lodger in the neat and homely residence of Widow Bates.

Mr. Horatio Welkin entered upon his duties on the following morning, and the good people of Hayling were rather surprised to find that he succeeded so well in pleasing the Squire. But he was the kind of man who pleases everybody. He had a bland, affable manner of dealing with those who came in contact with him that won golden opinions; before he had been in the village a month the inhabitants wondered how they had been able to get along without him.

He was the life and soul of the place, and such a good man. He was a regular attendant at church, took part in the organisation of cricket matches, started a fund for the better support of the village almshouses; in short, he was indispensable, and everyone sang his praises. Everyone? Well, there was one exception; old Newsome did not like him, and said so to Widow Bates.

"I don't like him," he said, shaking his grey head. "He's too short in the leg. Though," he added thoughtfully, "that don't interfere with his stewardin', I'll own."

"He's a good man," sighed the widow, "and I don't know what we should do without him. He's such a

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scholar! You should hear him explain the texts; he does it better than the minister. He knows Greek, too. You know that the Testament was written in Greek first, don't you? No? Well, you know it now."

"I dunno as I'm altogether agin his platform," observed Newsome, who had lately attended a political meeting, and was using the set terms whenever he could, "but I can't quite take to him."

Uncle Nat was known to be stubborn in his opinions, so Widow Bates said no more on the subject. She thought it was time to bid the old man good-bye and make her way home, but Newsome continued:

"I don't like him, and I'd keep my eyes on Susie, if I was you. A gal like that'd turn the head of any man, 'specially a man like that, and he might turn hers."

An angry word rose to the widow's lips, but she restrained herself. Old Newsome was very well in his way, but what could anyone expect from *him?*

The widow's reflections as she pursued her homeward way were not quite pleasant.

"Why should he not have his eye on Susie? He is a good man, and I believe he would make a worthy husband for any woman."

But a pang went through her at the thought, and her eyes filled with tears. Why?

After that, in spite of herself, she kept on the watch for signs of attachment between her niece and the steward, but she was never able to detect anything to give colour to Uncle Nat's suspicion.

It was Tuesday morning, just a fortnight after the talk with Uncle Nat. Susie and the widow were preparing breakfast; Mr. Horatio Welkin had not yet descended.

Rat-tat!

"A letter! I wonder if it is for us or for Mr. Welkin?" cried Susie as she went into the passage.

She came hurrying back with a black-bordered envelope in her trembling hand.

"Oh, auntie, it's from Uncle John, and it's addressed to you!"

Widow Bates took it without a word, tore open the envelope, and read it. Her sister was dead. She had died on the previous day. She was to be buried on the Saturday. "I may tell you," the letter concluded, "that she has disposed of her own property by will, and that she has left you £2,000."

For a few seconds the widow remained silent, while Susie took the letter and read it. Mrs. Bates and her sister had not been good friends for years. Her sister had married well, and occupied a much higher position than the widow, who felt that she was slighted.

"And I have said such dreadful things about her," murmured the elder woman, "and now she is lying dead!" She burst into tears as she thought of the past. Perhaps it was her own fault, after all, that they had been estranged.

* * * * *

Two months passed away, and the villagers had an item of intelligence to discuss. Widow Bates was to be married to Mr. Horatio Welkin.

"So it's true, eh?" asked Newsome, the next time Mrs. Bates took him a few vegetables from her garden.

"Why shouldn't I marry him?" queried the widow. "I shall be a lonely woman when Susie gets married—she won't stop an old maid all her life, bless her!—and he is a good man. She's away; and now he has taken a house in the street—I am very dull."

"Have you told Susie yet?" asked the old man nervously.

"There will be time enough to do that when she comes home. But what has she to do with it?"

"Nothin' much. Only—only—she's in love with him herself!"

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped the widow. "You must have been drinking to tell me to my face that my niece has fallen in love with him an' I not know it. Whatever makes you say such a foolish thing?" she added with questionable logic.

"I seen him a-kissin' her in the porch one day just before your sister died. She saw me go by—*he* didn't—and she came to me a little while after and asked me not to tell you yet, as they didn't want it to be known for a time that they was to be engaged. Then your sister died, and then Susie went up to London to stay with her cousins awhile." And Uncle Nat looked the widow straight in the face.

Mrs. Bates remained silent. The only change in her face was that the mouth closed firmly.

"Thank you for speaking out, Uncle Nat," she said thoughtfully, after a long pause. "Perhaps you would like a bottle of ale next time I am passing?"

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Bates; it *would* be a comfort." And they parted.

When Mr. Horatio Welkin next visited the cottage, his manner was particularly winning.

"I think it is time that you turned those two thousand pounds to better account than keeping it in the bank, Hannah," he remarked. "I have mentioned this matter before; but now, as your future husband, I think I may press it upon you."

"Certainly," returned the widow quietly. She knew nothing of financial matters, but she was evolving a little scheme in her mind. She would use him as a tool, as he had intended to use her. She would allow him to carry this thing through, with the idea that he was doing it for his own benefit; and when he had accomplished it, she would laugh at him and show him up publicly! How Hayling would ridicule him! He would be obliged to leave the village. Oh, what a difference between Horatio as he seemed to the people of Hayling and the rascal he was proving himself to be! But he had been found out!

"I know of a very profitable investment," he continued; "one that will yield much more interest than you now receive. See how many things you could obtain with the additional income!"

"We should be able to do so much more for the village with this extra income, eh?" said the widow innocently, inwardly chuckling at his coming downfall.

"Of course!" he exclaimed.

"Then I think it had better be carried out at once. We ought not to let an opportunity slip."

"Quite so," responded Welkin with alacrity. "I will bring the transfer to-morrow."

The next day the necessary transfer deed was brought. It was signed by the seller, and had the name of a London stockbroker on the back. On receipt of the cash or cheque, the deed would be lodged for registration in her name. She wrote the cheque, and left it open. "It will facilitate the transaction if it is not crossed," was the reason given; and the widow agreed.

"It seems all in order," said the widow.

"Quite" assured Welkin. "You can leave that to me! The broker has the certificate for this stock. When did you say that your niece was returning?"

"The day after to-morrow." And again the widow indulged in an inward chuckle.

"Exactly. I shall be going up to London to-morrow

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evening; I have business to transact for Sir Henry on the day after, and then I can conclude this matter. I may not return till the end of the week, but I will write to you so that you shall know that it has been carried through. I shall not be here, then, when your niece arrives."

"Very well," returned the widow. "But come back as soon as you can."

About noon on the following morning, old Newsome hobbled up to her door; he usually called if he were going past. Widow Bates made him comfortable with a glass of ale, and took him into her confidence concerning her plans for retaliating upon the steward. He laughed quietly and sipped the beverage handed to him by his hostess; then he asked a question or two and departed.

"I don't see through this yet," he muttered as he limped along towards his own dwelling. "Must think it over."

Uncle Nat seemed to find a great deal to think about that afternoon. He hobbled to the gate after dinner with a chair and a stool, he seated himself on the former and placed a glass and a bottle of good old ale on the latter, then he lighted his pipe. There he sat all through the afternoon apparently in deep thought. A sharp observer would, however, have noticed that he kept a watch on the road.

It was about seven o'clock when he espied Mr. Welkin, portmanteau in hand, coming down the road. Uncle Nat hastily pushed the things aside and opened the gate.

"Good evenin', sir," said Newsome respectfully as the other arrived in front of the cottage. "I should like to speak to you for a minute about my parish allowance."

"I am sorry, Newsome, that I really have not time just now. I have to catch the train."

"There ain't no train due for fifteen minutes, and this won't take long," replied the old man nervously. "I didn't think as you would refuse me a minute on that point. You know you promised yesterday." His fingers were twitching, and he was clearly in a state of great excitement.

Welkin hesitated, inwardly anathematising the man, but, knowing that he had time, finally consented. Newsome stifled a sigh of relief and half led, half dragged the other into the front room.

"Make haste, please," urged the unwilling visitor. "Why are you locking the door?" he asked as Uncle Nat turned the key and dropped it into his pocket.

"'Cos I've got somethin' to say. Look here!" Newsome took from a corner a long broom-handle to one end of which was tied a formidable carving-knife. "If you move, I'll dig this into you—understand? All right! Now listen.

"You've got a cheque out of Widow Bates on false pretences, as they call it. It ain't no good denyin' it; I can see it in your eyes, and I know it's in your black heart! Don't you come that game, now! I'm old and lame, but I've got strength enough to run this into you, and I'll do it!"

The steward retreated before the vicious flourish of the dangerous weapon.

"I don't understand much about these things, but I know that you can get that money because the cheque is open. Why didn't you have it crossed? Why are you going to London in such a hurry? Why are you running away from Susie? I'll tell you. Keep back, now! You've allowed the devil to get hold on you, and you're goin' to hook it with the widow's money! But I saw through it all, and I made up my mind to stop you. If you hadn't come in, I'd have hounded you down the street, but what I'd have stopped you!"

"You are mad! This is an outrage!" cried the entrapped man.

"I'm willin' to take the risk of what I'm doin'," returned the old man doggedly. "Give up that cheque!"

"I shall not!"

"Then I'll disable you with this, and hunt your things over till I find it," said Newsome fiercely. He was thoroughly in earnest, and he had Welkin in a corner of the room where there was no space for dodging. He deftly placed the point of the knife against the other's throat. "Give it up!"

Welkin tried to argue, and to insist that he could not get at the cheque unless the knife were taken away; but Newsome kept him pinned against the wall, and finally the rascal took out his pocket-book, felt for the paper, and tore it in pieces as his captor bade him.

Smiling grimly, Newsome backed to the door, unlocked it without turning round, and hastily ran—yes, ran—into the street, where he knew he was safe. The steward came out, glared at Uncle Nat (who waved his weapon warningly), and hurried down the street towards the station.

When the truth became known on the following day, Uncle Nat was the hero of the village, and everyone was filled with wonder at his daring, and at the rascality of the man whom they had all admired so much.

Widow Bates was so overwhelmed that she could only press his hand in thankfulness at having been saved by him from heavy loss.

Welkin was never seen again, thus proving the accuracy of the old man's suspicions.

Susie returned that day and learnt the truth from her aunt and from Newsome. It was not a merry party that evening at the cottage of Widow Bates, yet there was a goodly share of that quiet happiness which one feels at having escaped a great trouble.

"Suppose either of us had married him!" exclaimed Susie. And they both wept tears of mingled grief and gladness.

Uncle Nat will never want for the necessaries of life; the widow has settled upon him—despite his remonstrances—one quarter of the amount of the cheque that was torn up in his front room.

G. Merriam.

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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

But see what a mess the *Terrible* is making of the *Gefion* yonder in the very thick of things. Some of the ships are fighting at little more than pistol-shot distance; and the *Terrible* is well within half a knot of the dismantled *Gefion*, when Commander Madden, careering to starboard, trumpets forth through the uproar in a kind of German: "Haul down your flag, or I'll ram!" And half a minute later down sails the flag of the *Gefion*; and half a minute later still, down dives the *Gefion* herself, to her final harbour at the bottom of the Hwang Hai, which swallows with her all that part of her crew which a pinnace of the *Terrible* is unable to rescue.

The *Revenge* has not lodged a 12-inch shell in the fore-port magazine of the *Majestueuse* in vain. The French ship shudders,—then, a little forward of amidships, there is a red belch that spouts high above her mast, and curves outward in a lurid rain far over the sea—then there is a long reverberation of clattering thunder,—and the *Majestueuse* bursts, and sinks. But this row is mingled with another, caused by the ram of the foundering *Pascal*, which is working and ravening below the central armour-belt of the *Revenge*. The three vessels disappear from sight within a minute of each other.

There, on the far starboard edge of the British line of battle, the *Iphigenia*—on board of which is Fate—is levelling her whole port battery in one incessant roll of Gardners and Nordenfeldts, of six-pounders and three-pounders, upon a small approaching second-class torpedo-boat; growling harshly, is she, like a hound which bristles and snarls, retreating backward at the sudden apparition of an advancing lion.

The torpedo-boat lances one of her needles of steel, but it is caught by a wave, tossed upwards in a whiff of spray, and sent flying to starboard, where it explodes under the stern of the French first-class battery cruiser *Aréthuse*. As the tubes of the torpedo-boat sends forth another of the explosives, the ram of the *Iphigenia* passes into and over her small assailant; the torpedo explodes ten yards away, but tears a hole in the forward protective bulkhead of the *Iphigenia*. She commences to settle down by the starboard bow.

But what is this new phenomenon which now suddenly appals every eye that beholds it—the eyes of friend and of foe alike: something appalling by its mere novelty, not hitherto seen in sea or land warfare—something in the air—with all the properties and the powers of a spirit of evil?

It is a balloon—narrow, low, and long—French in origin. It can be steered backward and forward even in the teeth of a light wind; and its operators have the power of dropping dynamite shells with a steel casing, containing liquid oxygen and blasting gelatine, upon the hostile ships. It has come sailing with the light breath of the monsoon from a French ship, which has studiously kept far on the outskirts of the battle.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed; however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet.

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It is not a toy; nor is it sent up as a curiosity for the amusement of the British ships. It becomes stationary high up over the *Barfleur*, a black dot is seen to disengage itself from it, and a moment or two afterwards, ninety-five British sailors are dead, and the engines of the *Barfleur* are no longer there. Then, sparing of its shells, it moves on in another direction, and then swiftly in another, and another, letting fall each time on the ships below, its deadly missiles. Except two, which fall into the sea, every shell destroys a ship. One bullet of a rifle would be sufficient to prove fatal to it, but it is high, its movements are swift and sudden, and when at last it tumbles, pierced, into the sea, the battle is all but over. It has done its work well.

This had been the wisdom of France in the times of peace: that she had not despised the ingenious man and his ingenuities; she had invited the thinker; she had welcomed the dreamer of dreams.

This was the second time since the beginning of this war that the British had come into contact with the *Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée*, and had shuddered intensely at the contact.

But we are an ocean-race! Every cock on his own dunghill—and England on the sea. Had it not been for the French balloon, the British would very likely have won the battle by five seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy; as it was, they won by two seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy.

The last shot fired was fired by the *Iphigenia* at a German third-class cruiser, which she sank. This was the last but two of the Allied vessels left afloat; the other two had some time since struck their flag, and were now sinking fast.

Besides the *Iphigenia*, which had engines, funnels, screws, and rudder intact, but a considerable crank bow-wards, there were afloat of the British craft the *Daphne*, a twin-screw sloop, which was practically uninjured, and the *Barfleur*, which was floating like a mere log unable to move a yard. There were only fifty-seven men left alive in her.

The *Iphigenia* had one boat, and the *Daphne* two, still capable of passing over the water; and these were soon out, two of them making toward the *Barfleur* to take off her crew, and one in the direction of one of the still floating two ships of the Allies, for the purpose of rescue.

The sea was oilily smooth; the breeze had died to a mere breath; the sun had climbed to noon.

All was still. Over four buried navies the water swung lazily—as a cradle which one has ceased to rock, of its own motion.

Weirdly sad is that vast and wandering grave of the sailor; and careless is the great heart of the sea.

So intent were all who still floated during this quiet noon-tide in the central ocean upon the humane work of rescue, that no one noticed the swift approach upon them of a growing cloud of smoke from the east, and it was only when a shraphel shell came screaming through the fore-armoured tube of the already shattered *Barfleur*, that the British sailors, to their consternation, discovered that yet another enemy was upon them.

Presently, as though the new arrivals had found an entire fleet to oppose them, the air was full of fire.

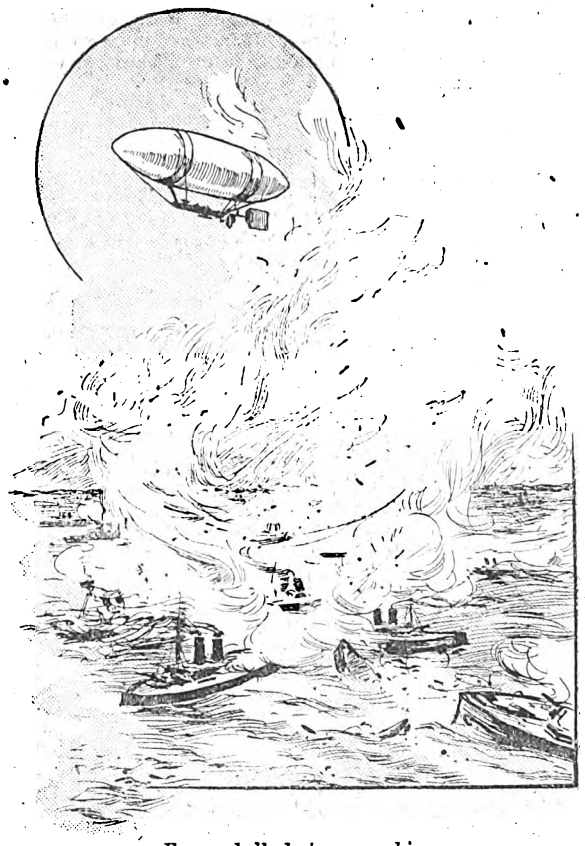
Five large cruisers were seen to be steaming at full speed upon the small remnants of the four fleets.

But cruisers of what nation? They carried no flag!

The two vessels of the Allies—small torpedo-boat destroyers—had long since struck their colours. And at once, as a precautionary measure, the three British vessels did the same.

But it made no difference! The rain of fire continued.

Happily, before the boat of the *Iphigenia* reached the *Barfleur*, the *Barfleur* dipped, and sank. So also did one of the Allied ships, and also one of the *Daphne's* boats with her crew. The other of the *Daphne's* boats, and the *Iphigenia's* boat, at once turned back to hurry to their ships



Every shell destroys a ship.

For the moment the *Iphigenia* was still out of effective range of the shells of this strange enemy; but one of the screws of the *Daphne* was shattered by a semi-submarine explosion.

At once, as their two boats reached them, the two British ships turned tail under forced draught, flying straight westward from this sudden, dread, mysterious foe.

Both were very swift; but the *Daphne* could now only move with half her speed. On board the *Iphigenia* men were working at the pumps.

The strange enemy, seeing that there was no longer any target for their shot, ceased fire, and slackened speed. Only the swiftest of the five cruisers was told off to continue the chase of the two fugitives.

She gained upon them both, especially upon the *Daphne*; but a stern chase is a long chase, and it was an hour beforethe first shell, shattering every gun in the *Daphne's* central battery, warned her that further flight was useless.

The *Daphne* had again hoisted her ensign, and now again she struck it; and *again* was surrender met by a hail of shot from this extraordinary adversary.

The *Daphne* at once re-hoisted her colours, spun sharply round to port, and bore straight down upon her pursuer.

Her commander was at least determined to sell the life of his ship dearly.

But he was met by such a cataract of shell and shot that he perceived that he must certainly founder before accomplishing the ram which he meditated.

He determined, far off as he was, to risk the launching of his last torpedo.

It proved a happy inspiration.

The little needle of disaster went hastening, in steadfast,

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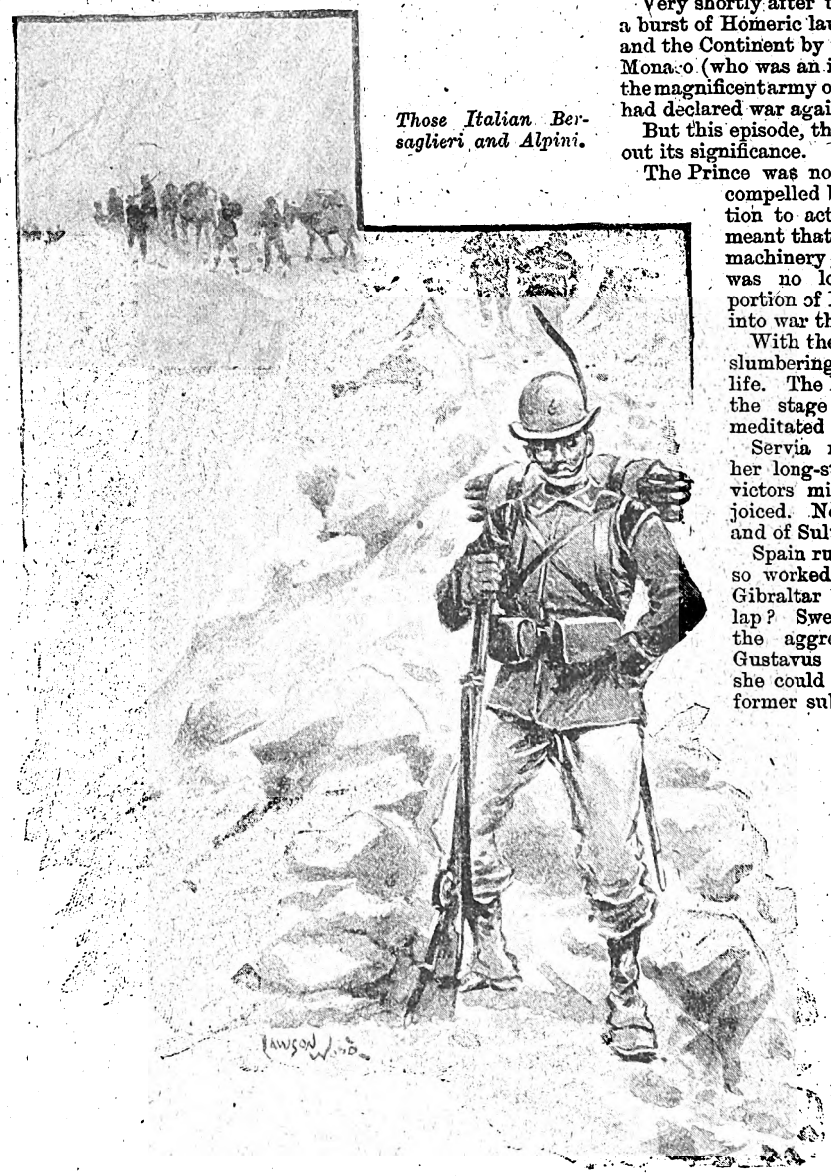
headlong flight, in spite of sweeping wave and baffling spray, straight upon its victim. It fastened upon her beam at the level of her armoured deck a few inches below the water-line, and burst.



Those Italian Bersaglieri and Alpini.

The strange vessel started, and leapt, and, with a cough that rent her, threw her fragments over the sea. She was the Japanese cruiser *Sado*.

A minute later, while the *Iphigenia* was still hastening to the scene of the conflict, the *Daphne* sank with all hands.

The *Iphigenia* was now miles out of sight of the other four Japanese cruisers.

She continued her course eastward, very slowly sinking all the time.

About midnight of the next day she was beached on a sandy bottom close to Kiao-Chau.

She had on board a hundred and eighty men.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Suicide of Europe.

At the time of the battle in the Hwang-Hai all Europe was at war.

Very shortly after the defeat of the Allies at Shoreham, a burst of Homeric laughter was caused all over England and the Continent by the announcement that the Prince of Monaco (who was an independent sovereign, and possessed the magnificent army of about sixty body-guard carabineers), had declared war against England.

But this episode, though amusing in itself, was not without its significance.

The Prince was not a mere pantomimist. He had been compelled by some intricacy of the actual situation to act as he had acted, and his action only meant that so complex and finely-poised was the machinery of modern European policy, that it was no longer possible for any considerable portion of Europe to be at war without plunging into war the rest of it also.

With the sound of the first cannon a thousand slumbering passions of the peoples started into life. The hour had struck for the placing upon the stage of a thousand schemes of long-meditated revenge, avarice, and aggression.

Servia rejoiced. Her secret vow to settle her long-standing account with her Bulgarian victors might now be redeemed. Bulgaria rejoiced. Now at last would she be free of Tsar and of Sultan alike.

Spain rubbed her sleepy eyes! How if events so worked in this upheaval of the world, that Gibraltar should once again fall into her lucky lap? Sweden looked round with something of the aggressive enterprise of her old hero, Gustavus Adolphus, wondering if now, at last, she could not accomplish the deliverance of her former subjects, the Finns, from the oppressive hand of Russia.

The Cretans, certain now that the Sultan would have his hands full of matters far more important than their small selves, girt on the dirk and carbine of massacre. Austria turned her eyes toward Salonika with languishing, and her right hand crept out to steal.

Roumania dreamt that Russia's only motive for war was to furnish an excuse for *her* destruction, and rushed in arms to her frontiers. Italy had territories still "unredeemed": and was not this the time to "redeem" them?

Denmark had been nipped and curtailed, and her day was come for vengeance; Portugal was alert to stab in the back her British rival in Africa in the hour of his preoccupation.

At Athens, at Belgrade, at Sophia—from London to Batoum,—from St. Petersburg to Megalo-Kastro,—the sword leapt from its scabbard.

Mobil!

The Sultan pressed his fez tighter upon his head, sitting luxuriously among cushions; and the panic of the sinner in the day of his calamity gripped coldly at this man's heart. He had heard that the main body of the Servian army was moving eastward from its head-quarters at Knuzevatz, and were being massed upon Nisch and Vranja, while fresh levies were being made in order to form a strong reserve; and he had hardly heard it, when the further news arrived that a bloody battle between Servian

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and Bulgarian divisions of infantry had occurred near Vlassina, in which the Servians had been routed with heavy loss.

The messengers of evil followed fast one upon the other, like the messengers of Job.

The same night a considerable Austrian body crossed the Save, and quietly occupied Belgrade.

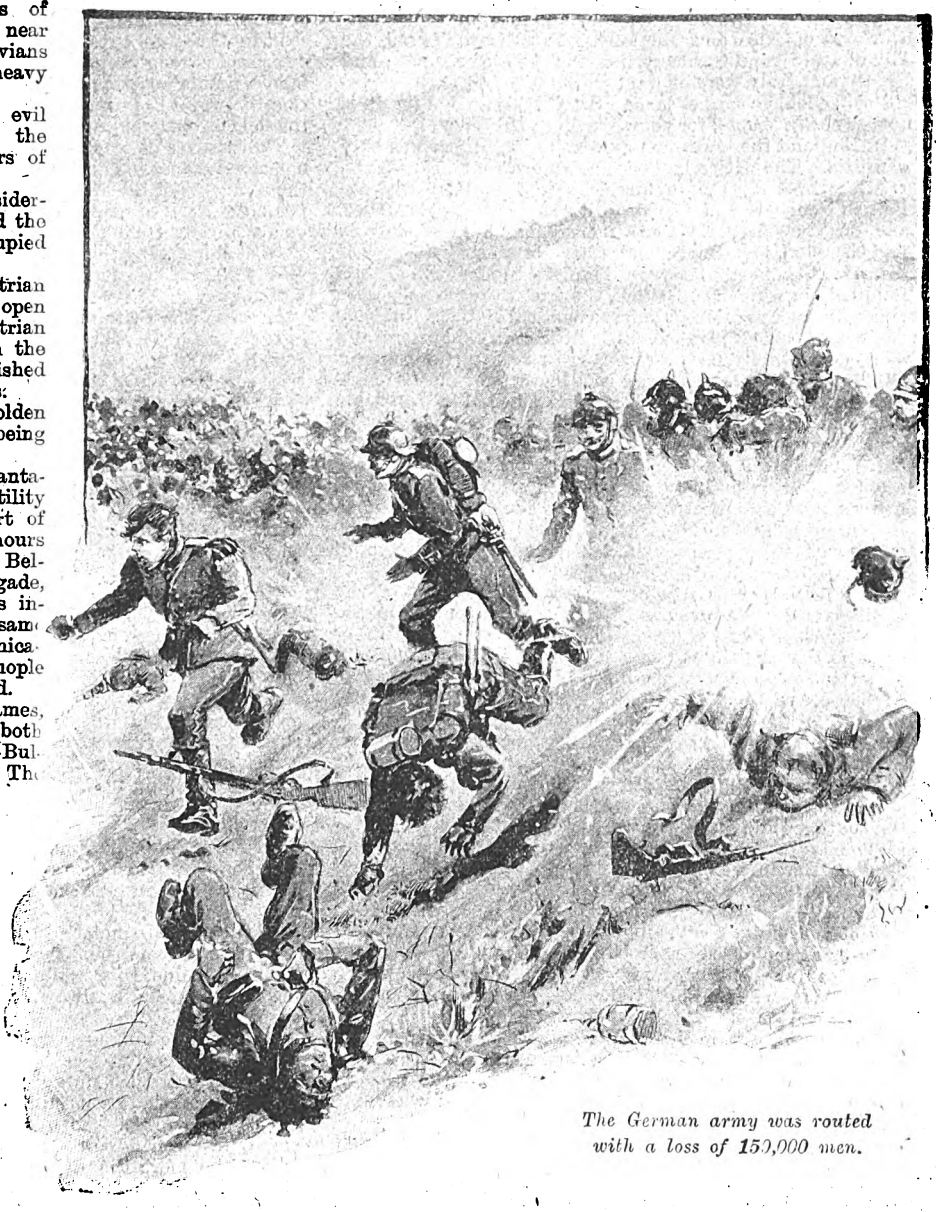
The next morning Austrian troops bivouacking in the open spaces of the city, and Austrian officers taking *déjeûner* on the boulevards, met the astonished eyes of the waking citizens.

It seemed as if the Golden Horn was in danger of being broken.

For this action was tantamount to an act of hostility against Russia on the part of Austria. Within a few hours after the occupation of Belgrade, another Austrian brigade, without firing a shot, was installed in Semendria. The same day telegraphic communication between Constantinople and Odessa was interrupted.

Macedonia was in flames, and a land of *émeutes*,—both Anti-Turkish and Anti-Bulgarian,—from end to end. The Vali of Salonika was assassinated and mutilated in the streets of his city.

The Porte had called out the last class of rediffs, and rediffs from Smyrna and the Tripolitaine, to the number of 70,000 were being transported, and massed at Salonika, with a view to the protection of the frontier line. Fifty thousand men, still left round Stamboul, were distributed along the chain of forts from Roumalie Kavak to the Golden Horn. A fleet of Turkish torpedo-boats without torpedoes, and ironclads without ammunition, steamed northward through the Bosphorus. But before they reached the latitude of Midia, a fleet of Russian Black-Sea battle-ships, torpedo-boats, and transports crowded with 90,000 troops from Odessa, had shelled and occupied Bourgas. (Bourgas is in direct railway communication with Constantinople.)



The German army was routed with a loss of 150,000 men.

The uncalled-for action of Austria in occupying the two Servian towns was Russia's defence for her occupation of the Bulgarian town.

Events followed one upon another with an ever increasing frightfulness of rapidity. Developments which at other times would have required weeks for their outcome, now required only hours. Europe was whirling in a delirium of haste. The next day half-a-dozen sotnias of irresponsible Cossacks pushed forward across the Galician frontier to Lubica; and without delay Austria declared formal war against Russia.

Here was a topsy-turvydom of things—brought about by the festering greed and the old malice of the nations. Germany was the pledged ally of Austria; Germany was the pledged ally of Russia against England; and Russia and Austria were at war!

Look, too, at those Italian Bersaglieri and Alpini, climbing like chamois over the Alps, with batteries borne on nimble-hoofed mules, by the Mont Cenis route. Italy means to get back, now or never, old Savoy—which is *her* Alsace-Lorraine—and is engaged in mountain warfare on the one hand with French Dragoons and Mountain-chasseurs among the Alps, and, on the other, is shelling with her

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fleet the batteries that defend the Riviera, preparatory to landing three Corps, her 2nd, 4th, and 6th, in the neighbourhood of Nice and Mentone. Yet Germany was the Ally of Italy; and Germany was the Ally of France; and France and Italy were at war!

Mobil, then, ye sons of men! Set briskly to it—for it is now or never. *Mobil* for your lives!

In England there was no longer a nation: there was only a Militia. The nation had become an army.

After three days of a terrific artillery battle between British ironclads and the forts de la Floride, de l'Heure, and de Tourneville, a British Army under Lord Roberts had occupied, first Havre, and then Harfleur. A series of disastrous battles, between Harfleur and Yvetot, had followed, in which the British, though outnumbered, were generally successful in claiming a nominal victory. But they made no decided advance. The hitherto unknown results of modern contrivances were found to make victory almost as fatal as defeat. The very small bullets of the Lee-Metfords and Lebel rifles—the enormous range of the magazine rifle—the use of smokeless powder—were found to be elements whose effects were, on the whole, ten times greater than had been anticipated. Division after Division hurried over from Britain to the support of the Havre Army; and Corps after Corps of the French massed upon Rouen, upon Harfleur, upon Confreville, and the neighbouring towns to oppose them. It became a question of men.

Five British ships, which were all that was left of the Mediterranean squadron after a great engagement in the Bay of Algeciras, were reducing Marseilles to a heap of ruins, at the very time when the Italian ships were engaged in an incessant artillery duel with the forts along the Riviera coast. Yet Italy and England were not formally allies.

North and south a dark cloud of tragedy widened over France. In less than six weeks after the commencement of the war her 7th, 14th, 15th and 16th Corps d'Armée had ceased to exist, in consequence of signal Italian victories in the south; while in the north a steady deluge of British regiments had accounted for seven more of her corps. Toulon, the impregnable, was in the hands of General Ricotti. Havre was a British base.

Already the territorial army was being detached to form part of the active army, and the reserve of the territorial army being mobilised for probable service.

France was shrinking under the intolerably harsh frown of Britain. The Joy of the whole earth was about to perish.

Britain herself, in her tough, silent way, was in the grip of bitter suffering. The Government had established public granaries all over the kingdom. But the price of bread was prohibitive. Whole villages and towns were perishing of hunger.

Singular as it now seems, she had had no separate cable connecting her telegraphically with South Africa, which was to a large extent her life. When she was disconnected with the Continent by her enemies, she found herself disconnected also with her most important colonies. It was necessary for her to adopt the slow method of sending out a small dispatch vessel round the Cape in order to recall the Australian and Pacific Squadrons home. The Suez Canal had long since been blown up by the French officials at Port Said.

At the Cape a naval battle had resulted, by some few ships, in a victory for the Allies, in consequence of overwhelming odds. Cape Town and all the British sea-board of South Africa had been shelled. Sierra Leone also was in the hands of the French.

But Australia and the sea-board of India were already comparatively safe. The enemy needed all their still floating navies nearer home.

On the strongly-fortified German coast England's success had been hardly less than marvellous. A small fleet of British war-ships and troopers had appeared at the entrance of the Kiel Canal, and captured Tronning.

Then the two great branches of the Teutonic race measured strengths. England had sent 100,000 men to fight a nation boasting the most exquisite military organisation the world has ever conceived, and capable of placing in the field an army approaching three millions.

The first result was mere disaster for the invaders,—but not moral defeat. They retained Tronning, and, by a *coup*, the remnants of the scattered army under Sir Evelyn Wood possessed itself of Stralsund. They did it under cover of a bombardment from the sea by a British fleet, among the British ships being the three Swedish cruisers *Edfors*, *Unca*, and *Geft*, which suddenly appeared, and joined in the action.

Nor was this Britain's last word to Germany.

It can never be that guns and swords alone can rule the world. The nation with the strongest heart, and the hardest brow, she is the mistress.

What happened at Havre, happened at Kiel and Stralsund. England with astonishing, steady pertinacity sent men to fight—only, *here*, the rigour of the thing was greater, the flame hotter.

In all that low-lying tract of land between Wismar, Neu Brandenburg, Anclam, and Stralsund, a series of murderous conflicts took place, Wilhelm himself directing the course of the campaign, and the British being entrenched for the most part behind a semi-circular line of earthworks stretching east and west, with Stralsund for base.

The three lines of railway, west to Lübeck and Hamburg, east to Stettin, and south to Berlin, were in the hands of the British, and after a day of fearful carnage in the neighbourhood of Neu Brandenburg, in which the German army was routed with a loss of 150,000 men, a successful rush was made for Stettin, which in the course of a night attack, fell into British hands.

The same night nearly the whole of Berlin was destroyed by fire, a catastrophe attributed to the action of the Socialists.

And ever England came to Germany—raw levies, meagre Cockney-born lads, boors from the Downs, Lancashire bodies, persons in kilts: not terrible to look at: terrible to meet as enemies.

Their chief characteristic is not that they are brave, and agile, and cool; but that by some unknown national quality of mind, they really contrive to do what they try to do. Their results always produce a certain effect of surprise.

Before these nimble invaders the *tapfere Krieger* of the Fatherland slowly receded.

From Thorn, that Metz of the East, from Königsberg, and Dantzig, and the great military depôts of the North-east, troops were drafted to repel this obstinate, rock-browed, small, unseasoned foe.

But the more the British poured their levies upon the German sea-board, and the greater the drafts by Wilhelm upon the as yet inactive corps, and the nearer the possibility of a call to be made upon the Teuton shopkeepers and burgers of the reserve, so the more Socialistic seemed to become the opinions of the German nation.

Socialism—with its absurdities—with its heavenly gospel of salvation for the world—had, for ultimate good, or ultimate ill, got into the blood of the nations during the latter half of the nineteenth century, to a far greater extent than anyone then supposed. Men who most hated the word, thought Socialism, and did not know it. It was bound to come out when the great moment for its birth arrived.

Wilhelm was walking above an abyss, and the ground beneath his feet was the thinnest parchment.

He had no sooner withdrawn a large portion of the Army of the Vistula, than Dantzig was sacked and taken by the Swedish fleet.

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The most extraordinary phenomenon of this vast and complex war was the success of Sweden everywhere. Within three weeks, a division of her gallant little army, consisting of only three corps, had gained a permanent *pied à terre* as far south as Bromberg; she had wrought havoc with the north-eastern coast-defences of Germany; and she had turned West Prussia into a depopulated wilderness. Another division of her army, consisting of five corps, had in two great battles on the shores of Lake Ulea routed two Russian war-hosts, and then had pushed on to Helsingfors, which they captured from the land-side, and made their headquarters. Intoxicated by success, they turned their faces across the Gulf of Finland toward Petersburg.

The hands of Russia were full enough.

Immediately after the outbreak of war with Austria, she had concentrated as fast as her defective railway system would allow her, great masses of troops, consisting of the 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Army Corps, in the direction of Lemberg. Behind these followed the more remote 13th, 16th, and 17th Corps.

Including the Corps d'Armée doing unsuccessful battle with the Swedes in Finland, by far the greater part of Russia's vast territorial power was now in the field, three additional army corps having advanced from Kars to the investment of Erzeroum, where a crushing defeat at the hands of a mixed army of Turks and British awaited them.

The eastern limb of the British Mediterranean fleet had steamed through the Bosphorus, conveying transports to Trebizonde, and then proceeded northwards, with the double object of a search for the Russian Black Sea Squadron, and the bombardment of Odessa and Sebastopol.

Austria had combined her forces into three armies: one in East Galicia, on the Dniester; another on the San with its back on Przenupl, the great bulwark of Middle Galicia; and the third on Cracow, the key of Western Galicia, on the Upper Vistula.

The Great White Tsar was pre-occupied. All round his sky were clouds and darkness. That mighty breadth of empire was already rocking to its fall.

The grey and green-coated soldiers of Russia were swarming round her borders, more on the defensive than the offensive. In the first fixed battle with the Austrians, General Gourko, the old Invincible, had been routed with such a horror of widespead massacre, that the brain of the aged general was unhinged. In a paroxysm of madness he shot himself.

And ever anew—after each orgy of blood—went forth the cry over Europe: *Mobil! Mobil!*

In a skirmish near Karatoya between two demi-regiments of Macedonians and Bulgarians, not a single man was left alive.

The fact was, that Europe was destroying herself. Everywhere, from Land's End to the Caucasus, the grin of a Spectre was perceived in the air—the Spectre of Hunger, of grim Scarcity, and raw-boned Want.

England had still America to supply her wants; but wants cannot be supplied save by the purchasing power of the party who wants. England's purchasing power had consisted in her commerce; and her commerce was near to death.

America, moreover, in this crisis, had no idea of small profits and quick returns. She had been thrown by the war into a state of financial collapse; and, with the blindness of selfishness, she raised her prices to prohibitive figures.

On paper, England remained rich enough. Her consols were taken up eagerly. The chief financiers and bankers of the world filled her war-chest. The security of by far the larger half of investments depended upon her success. As a matter of self-interest the Rothschilds, and Wall Street, and the kings of finance threw in their lot with her.

But the industry of the greater part of the world was at a standstill, and there is no real wealth which is not the direct offspring of industry.

In a paroxysm of madness he shot himself.

Germany, France, Italy, and Russia opened their ports to all comers, adopting the free trade policy of England—but too late. That, of course, which they were unable to buy was not brought to them to be sold.

Russian wheat, by Royal command, ceased to be exported. But it would quite certainly have ceased to be exported without the command.

The fields grew rich and oozy with a human sap, the blood of millions. But the hand of industry was palsied to sow the seed.

Mobil, then, ye children of Europe! *Mobil* all ye can! But know that in the end it shall bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Love which Foo-Chee Bore to Ah-lin.

Foo-Chee was No. 13 of the 3rd squad of the 1st company of the 2nd battalion of the 11th regiment of the 2nd brigade of the 1st division of the 17th Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every morning and every night he lifted up both his hands, and he blessed the name of Yen How, the Illustrious, who by his might had changed the old flow and show of things. For why? Because Ah-lin was No. 15 of the same squad of the same company of the same battalion of the same regiment of the same brigade of the same division of the same Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every day, between four and a quarter to six o'clock in the afternoon, the company went through a certain drill on the plain to the south-east of the walls of Pekin, half a mile from the walls, between Pekin and Tunchow. The roll was called before drill commenced, and if any one were

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absent, he, or she, was hanged publicly, by his heels, the next morning in Pekin. So Ah-lin *had* to be there; and Foo-chee saw Ah-lin, and blessed Yen How the Illustrious.

Ah-lin was a girl of eighteen, very pretty, with the elongated face which the Chinese adore, and eyes so long, and narrow, and slanting. She was the daughter of a tiny silversmith, whose shop was on the fifth floor of a house in a gaudy Pekin main street.

Her father lived his life in a corner of the single room which was his shop and dwelling. His life was a dream, and his food rice-greens and opium. When he awoke from his paradises, he languidly took up a piece of silver, and looked at it, and put it down again.

Ah-lin's father and mother and herself lived happily upon fifteen *tiaos*, say twopence and the twelfth of a penny, per week. The father was exempt from service, because one of his legs was hopelessly incapable of walking. The mother served in a different company to that of Ah-lin.

But in spite of her poverty, Ah-lin had an elongated face, and peepy little bewitching eyes, and a pig-tail of incredible length. Her feet, of course, had not been cramped, and she walked with a fine free swing, slanting a wee bit backward, like the true Northerner that she was. Even a statue might move to worship her.

"Foo-chee," said Ni-ching-tang, who was the father of Foo-chee, "take your eyes from Ah lin, my son. Leave Ah-lin be. She is loved by Sin-wan, and Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days which are."

Ni-ching-tang knew what he was saying; for he was a very subordinate cook in the multitudinous kitchen of Yen How; and Sin-wan was a warder in the Imperial Prisons. Ni-ching-tang and Sin-wan were very good nodding acquaintances, as we should say.

That Sin-wan loved Ah-lin there could be no doubt. He had more than once risked his neck in leaving the Imperial precincts at unlawful hours to make signalling gestures in the street before the fifth-floor room of Ah-lin's parents.

But Sin-wan was of middle age, and unduly stout. His neck was thick and hard, and seemed made for hanging. And his countenance was as hideous as Rin-foi's, the chief of the devils, as it stands carved out in the ebon idols.

Moreover, Sin-wan was greatly addicted to secret orgies on the fiery spirit *samshu*, and the impress of these brutalising excesses was left on his already brutal face.

Ah-lin's eyes, though narrow, could see much; and in her secret meditations in the darkness of the room at night, she would think that Foo-chee was nice to look at, and Sin-wan was not.

Foo-chee was a young man of twenty, and a seller of Tibet incense-sticks in the next street to that in which Ah-lin lived. And these two units, among the tens of thousands of human beings that swarmed and sweltered round them, felt within them the stirrings of that force which made the world.

Ah-lin had noted the following eye of Foo-chee often, long before the strange drilling commenced; and when she found herself almost next to him in the 3rd squad, she had a presentiment, and a tremor. It was the doing of the upper gods.

"Ah-lin," said Ah-lin's mother, Nan-lin, "turn away your eyes from the eyes that turn to you. Foo-chee is nice to look at, but Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days that are. A child should love her father and her mother above herself, and do all for them."

But it was the doing of the upper gods, what happened. Ah-lin was near to Foo-chee every day in the new drill; and the drilling straightened Foo chee's back, so that his backward slant as he walked was increased, till a woman would have died for him.

But Sin-wan, one night, beckoned to Nan-lin from the street, and Nan-lin sent down Ah-lin, and Sin-wan took Ah-lin by the hand, and said:

"Ah-lin is well formed, both in face and figure. Therefore I, Sin-wan, will marry with Ah-lin."

At this directness Ah-lin hung her head. It was not difficult to perceive the sequence of cause and effect in this matter—and she was afraid of Sin-wan.

"Do you say yes, Ah-lin?" said Sin-wan. "If you say yes, I will take you now to a meal in Hing-Chang-Li's eating-house, with fresh tea to drink."

"I would say yes," replied Ah-lin, "but my father and mother—to whom all honour—do not wish me to marry now."

"That is a lie, Ah-lin. Your father and mother wish you to marry. And you wish to marry, too. But you do not wish to marry with me. You wish to marry with Foo-chee."

"Foo-chee?"—she started—"Where did you hear the name of Foo-chee?"

"Your mother told me his name, Ah-lin."

"It is strange. I know no one with such a name."

"It is a lie, Ah-lin. His name is written in green and red picture-letters over the booth where he sells incense-sticks. I have seen it, and I have seen *him*."

"And what do you say is his name?"

"Foo-chee."

"Well, it may be, Sin-wan. I know nothing of the matter."

"Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin, if you do not marry with me."

"Oh! what for? Whom has Foo-chee hurt? He sells his incense-sticks, and hurts no one!"

"Now I have made you say that you wish to marry with him. For you do not wish me to kill him, Ah-lin."

"Kill him, if you wish."

"I will kill him."

"But why so?"

"Because you will not marry with me."

"I did not say I will not marry with you, Sin-wan."

"Then you will?"

"I must."

"When, Ah-lin?"

"When the new drilling is no more."

"Oh, that may be never. No. It shall be while this moon is big."

"I cannot, Sin-wan—I cannot."

"Why not, Ah-lin?"

"It is my father and mother,—to whom all——"

"It is that dog's gall, Foo-chee! Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin."

"Oh, me! I am not feeling happy, Sin-wan!"

"No, nor am I feeling happy, till you say that it shall be this moon! Nor shall Foo-chee feel happy, when my knife is rankling in his liver! Say it, Ah-lin!"

"I say it, Sin-wan."

"While the moon is big?"

"Yes, Sin-wan."

"Then I will go. And I will come again to-morrow night at this hour."

"Did you not say that you would take me to the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li for a meal, with fresh tea?"

"I cannot to-night, for I have no time, since I must return now to the Imperial Prison. But to-morrow night—or the night after—you shall feed at the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li."

So Sin-wan turned abruptly on his heels, and walked away on them. And when he arrived at the portals of the Imperial City, after traversing a vast complexity of streets, he was already late, and his bulging neck was in danger.

(To be continued.)

Look out for Next Week's *SHORT STORIES*. It will be the Easter Number, and a Series of Stock Exchange Stories will begin.

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A DANISH IDYLL.

There was once upon a time in Kraruper Inn a maiden named Karen. She attended to the serving of the guests herself, for the landlady lived among her pots and pans in the kitchen. And many people came to Kraruper Inn—neighbours who collected there when the autumn evenings began to darken, and sat in the warm room, and drank unlimited quantities of coffee punch. Travellers and wanderers, too, who came in blue with cold, stamping their feet and calling for something hot, that would enable them to reach the next station.

Karen went about silently, without haste, serving each in his turn. She was small and delicate, only a child, earnest and reserved, and the young fellows did not notice her. But she was very dear to the older customers, to whom a visit to the Inn was an event of importance. She prepared their coffee quickly, and served it seven times hot.

When she moved about among the guests with her waiter, the burly, coarsely-dressed men stood aside and made way for her, and every one looked admiringly after her. Karen had great, grey eyes that took in everything, and seemed to look far, far away, and her eyebrows were arched in surprise and wonder. Strangers thought she did not understand their orders; but Karen heard all, and made never a mistake. She had a way of her own, whether she gazed into the distance, or listened, or waited, or dreamt.

Some one stood near the window, and looking at the clock said: "The post is early to-night." The mail coach rattled over the pavement, the doors of the inn were thrown open and the wind blew the smoke from the stove.

Karen entered from the kitchen just as the conductor stepped into the door and greeted the company with a hearty "Good evening!"

He was a tall, handsome man, with dark eyes; a crisp brown beard framed his face, and curly brown hair covered his small head. His long, heavy mantle of beautiful red Danish cloth was trimmed with black fur and hung from his shoulders. The entire light of the two dim paraffin lamps that were suspended from the wall over the table centred itself on this spot of glorious crimson, as if it loved it and left all the grey and black of the room to grow still greyer and blacker. And the tall figure—with the fine, dark, curly head, and the long folds of the crimson cloak—shone like a very marvel of splendour and colour.

The hostess was in the deepest despair. Everything had gone wrong in her kitchen. She had lost her spectacles, and boundless confusion filled the inn. The travellers pounded the table with the bell loudly; the fish pedlars laughed until they were half dead over the hares spread before them; the bewildered farmer tapped the landlady on the shoulder with the candlestick and puffed himself out like a turkey cock.

And amid all this maddening confusion Karen had disappeared. The postillion Anders sat on the driver's seat; the stable boy stood ready to open the door; the travellers in the mail coach were impatient, and so were the horses, although they had nothing pleasant to look forward to, and the wind rattled and whistled through the stable.

At last the conductor, for whom they were waiting, came out. He carried his mantle over his arm as he stepped into the coach, and excused his delay with a few curt words. He laughed to himself as he drew his cloak about him and took his seat. The door was closed, the mail coach rolled on.

Anders let the horses trot gently, now there was no more need to haste. From time to time he glanced slyly at the conductor, who still laughed to himself, while the wind ruffled his hair. The postillion laughed, too. He suspected something. The wind followed the coach to a turn in the road, then threw itself again over the plain and sighed mysteriously through the heather bushes.

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When Karen returned to the inn parlour there was a glimmer of a smile on her lip, and once when she raised her eyes their light was dazzling. When she felt the men's eyes following her, she went into the next room where the travellers sat, pretending that she wanted some teaspoons from the cupboard.

"Did you notice the conductor?" asked one of them.

"No; not till he went out. He left very quickly," answered the other with his mouth full of roast hare.

"A very handsome fellow. I attended his wedding."

"So—is he married?"

"Yes, indeed; his wife is the daughter of the landlord at Ulstrup, and I got there the night of the wedding. That was a jolly time, I assure you. They have two children, I believe."

Karen dropped the teaspoons and went out. She heard nothing that was called after her from the inn. She went across the court to her room and began mechanically to tidy it up. Her eyes stared into the darkness. She pressed her hands to her head, to her breast, she groaned. She could comprehend nothing—nothing!

She heard the landlady's complaining voice: "Karen, dear Karen!" it called. She ran out across the court, behind the inn, across the moor.

The winding strip of grass glimmered in the half light as if it were a path, but it was no path. No one dared to follow it, for it led abruptly to the brink of the great pond. The hare quickened his steps. He heard a rustling. He gave long jumps as if he were mad to escape; not knowing what he, feared he fled over the plain.

The fox stretched out his sharp nose and stared in surprise at the hare. He had heard nothing! According to the instincts of his kind he had crouched there in the hollow—he was conscious of no terror. He could not understand the action of the hare. He stood long with outstretched head and slinking body. His bushy tail was hidden by the heather bushes, and he began to wonder if foxes were getting duller or hares wiser.

But when the first wind had run its long course it turned into a north wind, and then into an east wind, and then into the south wind, and at last came back over the sea as the west wind again, threw itself upon the dunes and long, mysterious sighs moaned through the heather bushes.

But there were wanting in Kraruper Inn two wondering grey eyes, a little blue woollen gown that had grown too small, and the hostess complained more than ever. She could not understand it at all. No one could understand it, save the postillion Anders, and one other.

Alexander Killam.

THE TALKING PICTURE.

It was quite remarkable to hear a picture talking, but my famous oil painting, "Sylla, the Queen of the Sea," certainly was speaking.

"Do you really think me beautiful?" she asked again, and I answered her this time, "Yes!"

That was a rational question and a rational answer, for she had been in the last exhibition of the Royal Academy, and I had been offered an extravagant sum for her.

"Why do you think me beautiful?" she asked. And as she spoke she drew one foot out of the water, and to my surprise, a few drops fell on the desk, wetting my papers and a half burnt cigar laying on a tray.

Had the would-be purchaser known how realistic the water in my picture was, he would undoubtedly have offered me a fabulous price for it.

"Why do I think you beautiful?" I said; "why, because I made you, of course."

"Yes," she answered, "I owe my existence to you." She put a beautiful foot on my desk and stepped completely out of the frame, then jumped lightly to the floor.

"Why did you dress me in this stuff?" she asked petulantly, pulling at the seaweed that partly adorned her figure, and leaning so closely over my shoulder that I seemed to feel how damp she was, and smelt what might be termed the salty freshness of the ocean.

"Seaweed becomes you," I answered, "but if you would like something different, I'll adorn you in a new dress when you get back into the frame."

It occurred to me at this stage of the interview that my wife, who was in the library, poring over a volume of Macaulay, might at any moment enter.

"I don't intend going back to the frame," Sylla said, as she pressed a damp kiss on my cheek. "I'm going to stay here with you."

The kiss ignited the powder of my passion, so to speak, and I instantly wished my wife in the scene where Macaulay's lays are laid.

Sylla wound a piece of seaweed round my right hand. "Do you remember," she murmured, "how you wondered whether you would make my eyes blue or green? Aren't you glad you made then blue, now?"

I looked into her eyes as she finished speaking, and my soul went to them.

"Now kiss me!" she commanded, like a cherub giving orders, and I did so.

Sylla commenced to feel what can only be termed kittenish, and slipped a bit of seaweed down my neck. "I don't think your wife at all pretty," she said.

"Neither do I," I answered recklessly, though my wife was the belle of the town she came from, but I could not see now where her beauty came in.

"I have seen you look at me for hours and hours," she went on, "long after you finished me. What made you do that?"

"I do that with lots of my pictures," I said; "it's a habit of mine; and, besides, I made you such a beautiful siren."

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"Oh! but I'm not a siren," she said, "because sirens have no feelings, and I have!" In proof of which she burst out crying. "Look!" she exclaimed, "I am weeping pearls!" and, true enough, she was, for in an instant I was on my hands and knees picking them up.

"How many are there?" she asked. She was smiling now, and her eyes shone brighter for having wept.

I counted them over, greedily, I confess. "Forty-two!" Sorrow's gems indeed! Often had I seen my wife weep, but who ever thought of counting tears before?

"Let those be a marriage dowry," Sylla said, pointing to the pearls glistening in my outstretched hand, "for of course we are going to be married!"

Oh! of course! But there was my wife in the library—I would tell Sylla, and I told her.

The Queen of the Sea laughed. Such a laugh! The music caused by a southern wind caressing the strings of an Æolian harp alone may be compared with it.

"What business is it of your wife's?" Her voice for the first time sounded sharp, but it became soft in an instant. "You have made me to love! I know your wife has not such pretty arms as I have, nor such dainty hands. Your wife has not such soft cheeks,"—her own were against mine as she spoke—"nor such hair,"—her tresses caressed my neck as she trilled in my ears—"nor such love!"

"Where shall we get married?" I queried, with a vague remembrance of having asked the question before—somewhere.

"Why, down at the bottom of the sea," laughed Sylla. "You ought to know, you painted it."

I looked at my painting; it looked rather blank without Sylla. It must have been lonely for her, I reflected, in the water all by herself. No wonder she wanted company.

"I'd like to say good-bye to my wife," I confessed to Sylla; "she's been a true little woman and a good wife." Something like tears came to my eyes—though they were not pearls—and I felt like relenting.

Sylla's arms were round my neck the next moment. "Don't ever speak of your wife again! You know she compares with me about as well as a daisy does with a rose! Just leave the pearls on your desk for her. You know if you want any more you've only got to make me feel unhappy, and I'll give them to you. Now follow me!"

She was on the desk and had one foot in the picture when I heard a tap at the door. It was my wife rapping. How unfortunate! In another quarter of a minute I would have been at the bottom of the sea! I looked into Sylla's blue eyes for directions; she pointed to the water, and, clasping my hand, commenced to pull me towards her.

I got a sudden notion that I didn't wish to go with Sylla to the bottom of the sea at all, and pulled the other way. She grew furious and shook me violently, while the sea grew blacker and blacker. I felt I was giving way, when my head was suddenly jerked upward, and I opened my eyes.

* * * * *

My wife, who had aroused me, had a cup in her hands. "The doctor said the next time you went to sleep suddenly in your study you should take this," she said, handing me the cup.

I had a better prescription than the doctor's. I sold my picture to the man who had so long begged to be its purchaser.

And I often wonder whether the Queen of the Sea has paid him a visit, or whether she intends doing so.

But then—he's a bachelor.

Arthur Lamb.

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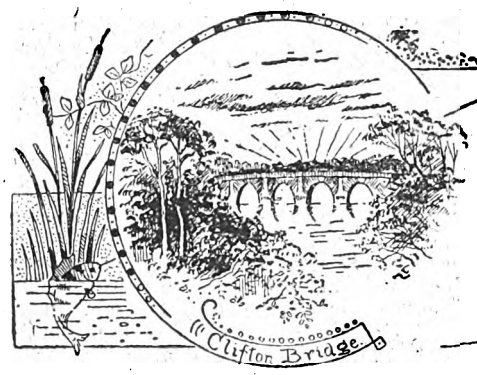

LITTLE JAN.

One night a man stopped me to ask for money to buy bread. There was such an earnestness in his voice and gestures that I questioned him. He was a man of fifty, ragged and pinched, and the story he told of looking for work in vain for weeks and weeks was no doubt true.

"The bread is not for me, but for little Jan," he explained when he saw that I was interested.

"And who is little Jan?"

"My little gal, sir—my gal Jan—the only one of the family left me. Wife dead—boy dead—only little Jan left, and she's sick and hungry. Poor dear!"

"And you and your daughter live alone, eh?"

"All alone—Jan and me. It's right down there, second turning on the right, and up six flights of stairs. Don't s'pose you'd care to come and see her, would you? It's hard climbing, but you'd see what poverty can do for a man when you get to the top of the house. Poor Jan—poor litt'e thing! It's hard to be ill and without food or medicine."

I took him to a grocer's, and we got bread and fruits and jellies and other things, and at every order he lifted up his hands and exclaimed:

"Good Lord, but to think of it! All this for dear little Jan—poor sick Jan! Why, sir, when she sees all these things she'll think Heaven has come down to her!"

It was a tenement of narrow passages and steep stairs and small rooms. There was the odour of sewer gas—the noisome smell of poverty whenever you find it. You felt the dampness, and you expected the faces peering at you to reflect the degradation of the place.

"You won't fail me, sir," whispered the man as we stood in the dimly-lighted doorway through which poverty had passed and repassed thousands of times.

"What do you mean?"

"You'll go up with me and see Jan and help me tell her all about it—poor gal!"

"Yes, I'll go up."

"And praise her, sir," he whispered as he put a hand on my arm, "and tell her she'll get well and better times will come. You'll find her sick and hungry, but you'll see a dear good gal, who'd die before she'd make a complaint."

At the third flight, where we halted for breath, he touched me again as if to make sure that I hadn't vanished, and whispered in my ear:

"Tell her that I'll soon find work, and things will go all right again. She's got a clean frock laid away in the chest, and perhaps you'll come some day and take her to the park. She knows how I love her, but you can say a word or two about that if you will. Poor little Jan—poor little gal!"

At his door, on the fourth floor, we waited for a moment, and he gripped my arm and put his mouth close to my ear to whisper:

"She's waiting for me to come home with a stale loaf, and here we've got all that a rich man would want for his dinner. She'll laugh and cry, and want to kiss you, and please don't mind it! Stand here in the door till I light the bit of candle."

He went in on tip-toe and struck a match and lighted the piece of candle standing in a broken cup on the table. Then he beckoned to me, and as I softly entered he picked up the light and said:

"Little Jan is asleep! Ain't she a brave gal not to cry at the darkness when left alone? Come over, and we'll wake her up and tell her the good news."

We went over to the bed of rags, and in the dim light of the candle I saw a skeleton form with ghostly face lying on the old pieces of quilt and carpet. Hands which had wasted away to mere claws were folded across the child's breast, and her sunken eyes were tightly closed.

"Jan! Jan!" whispered the father as he bent over her.

She made no move in response.

"Poor Jan—poor little gal! She is ill and hungry and does not hear me. Jan, father is home—open your eyes!"

There was not the slightest movement from the wasted form on the bed, and the man turned to me and said:

"Poor Jan—how sound she sleeps!"

"Jan is asleep in death," I answered.

"What! Jan dead—Jan dead here in the darkness and alone!" he almost shouted as he laid a hand on her head.

"Even so. See! She passed away without a struggle. Your Jan will never know sickness and hunger again."

It was so. Her body was growing cold to the touch. Lying there on that bed of rags, with the darkness shutting her in and no human being within call, she had welcomed the coming of death with a smile, and sang in the gladness of her heart as the angels bore her through the valley of the shadow to the eternal sunshine beyond.

"And she is dead—Jan is dead!" whispered the father.

"Yes, poor child!"

He sat down on a chair with his face to the wall, and rocked his body to and fro and moaned and wept. So I left him and stole quietly down the dark and narrow stairs and out into the night. It were better thus, for what could I say to comfort him?

Ashby. Rees.

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A propos of the notice which appeared in last week's *S.S.*, I now publish a letter from Mr. John Kirk, which gives full particulars regarding the Fund in the twenty-five centres which are included this year.

DEAR MR. PEARSON.—The success and development of the FRESH AIR FUND must be very gratifying to you and to your sympathetic readers. It says much also for the initial scheme projected six years ago, that it has required little or no alterations in its extension throughout the country.

We had in our minds, if you remember, primarily, the little East-enders of London. Now the Fund has become firmly rooted in most of the great cities of the United Kingdom.

Once again it has been my privilege to share with your good secretary, Mr. Kessell, in visiting or communicating with the different committees and friends responsible for the administration of the FRESH AIR FUND in the several localities.

We have found everywhere an increasing eagerness to share in the Fund, and a growing appreciation of its benefits. Further, we have been charged with grateful expressions of thanks to yourself, and your generous-minded contributors.

Acting on your authority, we have provisionally promised the numbers hereunder stated for the ensuing summer. Opposite each town is given the names of the secretaries or correspondents representing the various committees.

Assuredly your earnest intentions on behalf of the poorer little children of our great towns will be as heartily seconded by your readers as in past years.

This is the sincere wish of the voluntary workers in London and elsewhere, who will be only too glad, one and all, to co-operate with you for another season in making the youngsters supremely happy by at least one day's fresh air in the country.

Yours faithfully,

John Kirk

Here is a list of the 25 towns from which the children will be sent during the coming season:

ABERDEEN.—2,000 Children.
A. J. McConnochie, C.A., Sec. Children's Fresh Air Fortnight, 74 Union Street, Aberdeen.

BIRMINGHAM.—5,000 Children.
George Skipway, Sunday School Union, 2 Temperance Institute, Corporation Street.

BELFAST.—4,000 Children.
W. J. W. Roome, Whitehall Buildings, Ann Street.

BLACKBURN.—2,000 Children.
J. T. Walkden, Ragged School, Victoria Court, Ainsworth Street.

BRISTOL.—2,500 Children.
George Clayton, 59 Cromwell Road.

BRADFORD.—2,000 Children.
Thos. Newbould, Cinderella Club, 8 Rand Street.

BOLTON.—2,000 Children.
J. Popplewell, 9 Pool Street.

CARDIFF.—2,000 Children.
G. Percy Thomas, 72 Claude Road.

DUBLIN.—2,500 Children.
A. J. Nicholls, L.L.B., The Castle, Dublin.

DUNDEE.—2,000 Children.
R. C. Campbell, Free Breakfast Mission, 12 Victoria Chambers.

EDINBURGH.—2,000 Children.
Thos. Davidson, 18 Granville Terrace.

GATESHEAD.—2,000 Children.
J. H. Watson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 140 Sidney Grove.

GLASGOW.—5,000 Children.
A. McCracken, 40 St. Vincent Place.

HULL.—2,000 Children.
J. B. Anderson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 3 Junction Place, Queen's Dockside.

LEEDS.—3,000 Children.
John W. Hives, 6 Lyddon Terrace.

LEICESTER.—2,000 Children.
H. Lawrence, Ragged School Mission, Lynton, St. James's Road.

LIVERPOOL.—5,000 Children.
E. W. Cropper. Ragged School Union, 3 Harkins Hey.

LONDON.—40,000 Children.
John Kirk, Ragged School Union, 37 Norfolk Street, Strand.

MANCHESTER.—5,000 Children.
W. E. Rowcliffe, 30 Cross Street, and J. P. Reid, Hon Sec. Ragged School Union.

NOTTINGHAM.—2,000 Children.
F. W. Dobson, Queen's Road.

NEWCASTLE.—2,000 Children.
J. H. Watson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 140 Sidney Grove.

OLDHAM.—2,000 Children.
R. Peacock, Poor Children's Holiday Fund, Chief Constable's Office.

PORTSMOUTH.—2,000 Children.
B. Tilly, Lonsdale, Cottage Grove, Southsea (Ragged School).

SHEFFIELD.—3,000 Children.
W. H. Totterdill, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 81 Douglas Road.

SUNDERLAND.—2,000 Children.
Mr., Alderman Bruce (Mayor), 64 Nile Street.

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Serial Story.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone.

CHAPTER VII.

Captain Cadocu Bars the Way.

While Madame Agnes and Amaury Montruel were in the cathedral, noise and turmoil continued to reign outside. As the evening advanced the masons prepared to leave work, the stall-keepers and itinerant vendors packed up their goods, and the beggars crept off one by one either to haunt the dark alleys through the night in search of plunder, or to sleep in the fetid dens they called home.

Poor Eric returned to his lodgings with a heavy heart, full of anxiety for his sister, of whom he had seen and heard nothing since she had left him early that morning.

When Agnes de Méranie had regained her negligent escort (for, with the exception of Montruel, none of them had troubled themselves to come to her assistance in the crowd) they all started on their way back to the Louvre, but as they were riding across the top of the Rue de la Calandre, the Duke of Burgundy, who headed the *cortége*, found his way barred by a troop of armed men, who were shouting snatches of drinking-songs and waving their unlighted torches in the air.

"Give place, varlets!" cried the Duke, with his hand on his sword.

"Oh, oh!" said a jovial voice. "Here is one of my noble companions of the night before last! Welcome, my lord Duke, do you not recognise your fellow-guest?"

"Let us pass, or we'll ride you down!" and the Duke drove the spurs into his horse's sides. The next moment he felt the beast stagger and fall beneath him. It had been stabbed in the withers, and died instantaneously.

"I don't like killing good horses," said the same voice out of the growing darkness, "but I had not the conscience to kill you, my lord, for such an idle threat."

Burgundy was on the ground, struggling vainly to disentangle himself from the stirrups and trappings of his dead steed, but he shouted furiously:

"Charge those villains and cut them down to a man!"

A derisive laugh from the festive band greeted these wild words, but not a man moved to obey the Duke's command, for the whisper had gone round that seemingly gallant train:

"The Free-lances! The Free-lances!"

Montruel pressed close to Agnes and whispered:

"This man must be won at any cost. He is the Captain of the Free-lances. All the others are useless without him!"

The leader of the troop laughed louder than all the rest, but he was not malicious, for he bent down and gave the unlucky Duke a helping hand to rise, saying as he did so:

"Ouf! You are heavy, my lord Duke, and laughing makes me weak! So you wanted to cut me to pieces? Is that the way you pay your debts?"

"It's that scoundrel Cadocu!" cried one of the nobles. "And he's drunk to boot!"

In spite of their brave display, these haughty barons made no attempt to force a passage, and it was well they did not do so, for fresh contingents had emerged from the neighbouring taverns, and the air resounded with the clatter of swords and the clinking of spurs.

"How much would it take to buy this man?" asked Agnes, whose mind was running more on personal schemes than the present danger.

Montruel told her of the sum promised to Cadocu by the Legate, and that the King had doubled it.

"What? the King offered him two hundred thousand crowns?" she said angrily. "But that is *our* money; what is to become of *me* if the finances are squandered in this mad fashion?"

The Captain of the Free-lances now ordered the torches to be lighted, and his orders, unlike those of Burgundy, were obeyed immediately. The flaring, lurid light illumined a strange scene. There in the cross-roads stood that glittering throng of courtiers and nobles, each with a frown on his brow and an impotent oath in his heart, making a pretence of protecting fine ladies pale with fright, all held at bay by a handful of men, whose coarse, rugged features were mostly relaxed by a half-drunken smile.

Cadocu advanced holding a torch in his hand.

"Come, my lords, you've not forgotten our meeting the

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other night, and if my friend Jean de Nesle is here, I'm sure he will have a word for his comrade Antoine."

"Good evening, friend Antoine!" said Jean de Nesle promptly; "you have been supping freely I note, so I'm sure you will not have the heart to stop us any longer from doing likewise."

"If ever I catch you near Dijon, my man, you shall pay for this night's work!" hissed the Duke of Burgundy through his white, trembling lips.

"All right, my lord Duke; I'm glad to hear you talk of paying, for there is that little matter of thirty thousand crowns which the King taxed you with on my behalf, and, moreover, you owe me humble thanks for not having made myself Duke of Burgundy that night as I might have done, and then what would you have been to-day, eh?"

Agnes de Méranie was still counting the cost of Antoine Cadocu.

"If I sold all my castles and my jewels, I could not raise enough to buy this man," she said at last petulantly.

"I will help you, my Queen," said Montruel, and then he enumerated the various sources from which he could draw funds to assist her, but she barely heard him. She was thinking of another way to buy this costly adherent.

"My lord," she broke in suddenly, "I must see this man!"

"*You*, madame——?" he stammered.

"Yes, *I*. And I must see him to-night, at your house!"

"But, madame, it is unheard of—it is—still my presence will lessen the danger."

"And I must see him alone!" she added imperiously.

Montruel made no answer, he knew her mood too well to oppose it.

"Come along, my boys," cried Cadocu. "I've still a few coins in my purse, and the tavern keeper of St. Landry knows me well enough. I will give you credit, my lord Duke, till to-morrow, and Jean de Nesle shall go to his supper! Pass on, my good sirs, unless you will follow me to François Gauthier's and quaff a cup of good wine to your fair ladies' health?"

"Another time, friend Antoine," said Jean de Nesle, who was the only one who could speak civilly to this daring knave.

Cadocu jumped up on to a mile-stone at the corner of the street and gave an imperious sign to his men, who promptly drew up in single file in front of the houses, so that, save for the mocking jeers of the Free-lances, they might have been placed there as a guard of honour to the cavalcade.

"Oh, oh!" cried the Captain as he spied the ladies in the train, "the noble Duke did not tell us this!"

He was a fine, stalwart fellow, with a cheery, open countenance, and every woman's eye rested on him as they passed.

"Jean de Nesle," he called out, "is Madame Agnes among this fair bevy?"

Jean de Nesle was out of hearing, but Maître Samson, who believed in making powerful friends whenever he could, pointed her out to Cadocu, who rose on tiptoes to see her better.

"Umph! She's with that blackguard Montruel," he muttered. "I've heard something of that affair! They told me she was like that poor girl Agnes the Fair, whom that cur had put out of the way; and, *pardieu*, they spoke the truth—they're as like as two peas!"

At this moment Agnes de Méranie passed in front of him. She had heard his question, and her face was flushed—not in anger, but with pleasure at the promise of success afforded to her plans by his curiosity. She was bent on saving the two hundred thousand crowns, so she gave him a most radiant smile and a gracious little inclination of the head.

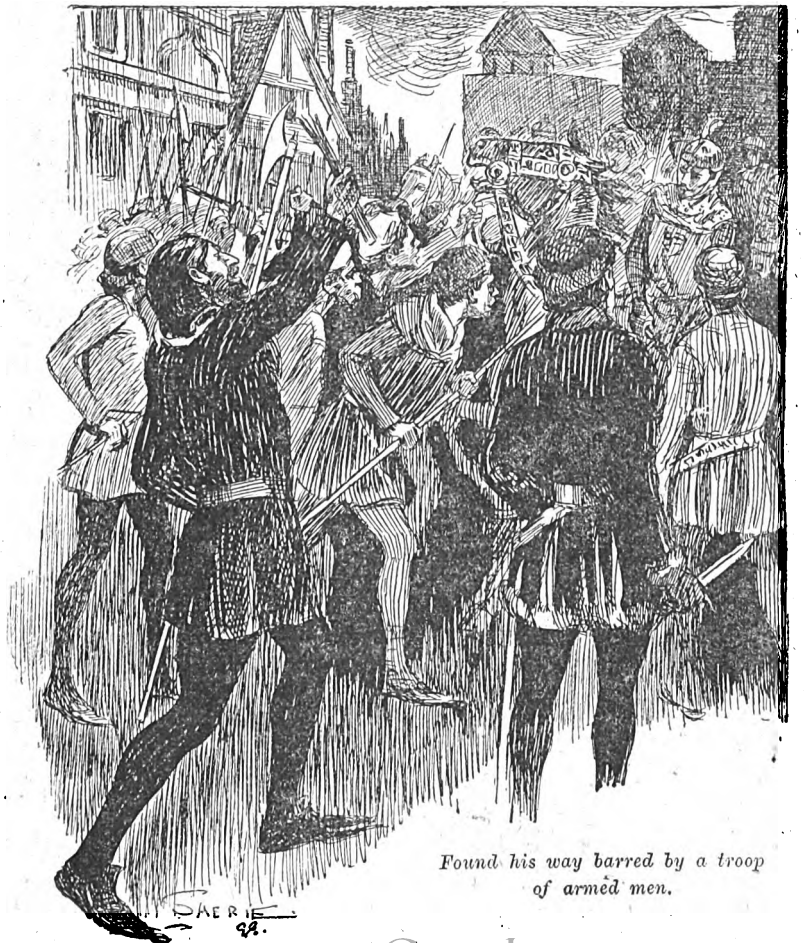
"*Peste*," he said to himself, for he was susceptible to feminine charms, "my little Agnes herself couldn't smile sweeter than that."

While he was reflecting on her attractions and condescension, she was whispering her imperative commands to Montruel, who fell back, and allowed the procession to go on without him.

"Now, mates, let us go and spend the night right merrily! Thank goodness, we've drunk enough to make that villain Gauthier's wine taste like nectar! *En route!*"

The men needed no second bidding, and soon the Captain was left, as he thought, alone in the deserted street, when he felt a hand on his arm. He turned round to find Amaury Montruel at his elbow.

"You here?" he said shortly. "*Diable*, you'd better go elsewhere, I can tell you! I was fond of that poor girl you had murdered yesterday, and I hate gentlemen rogues who



Found his way barred by a troop of armed men.

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pay poor men to do their dirty work while they themselves won't run the risk of fair fight."

"It doesn't matter in the least to me what you like or hate, Maître Antoine," replied Montruel coolly, for, like most of his contemporaries, he was not wanting in physical courage. "I am here to deliver a message to you. Will you listen to it?"

"And you'd give the eyes out of your head if I'd say no! You'd like to go back and say, 'I've done my part, but he won't listen.' But I'll hear what you've got to say in the tavern yonder, not here in the street, and you can drink a cup of wine on your own account if you like, but, by the Foul Fiend, I'll not stain my lips by drinking with such as you!"

"That is, as well; for Amaury Montruel would never stoop to touch glasses with Antoine Cadocu."

The Captain of the Free-lances started and laid his hand on his sword, but his companion merely shrugged his shoulders and faced him with folded arms.

"*Pardieu!* I'm playing the part of the Duke of Burgundy, for I touch the hilt and don't draw sword! But follow me, my lord Montruel, and when I've heard your message we can discuss other things."

The Free-lances had already begun their revels, and a noise that would have done justice to Pandemonium greeted the arrival of their chief and his unwilling guest.

The tavern of St. Landry was a large, low room, which was approached by descending several steps cut in the soft earth and kept in their place by some mouldy pieces of wood.

There was a torch fixed in the middle of the cellar, for it was little else, and a small boy was deputed to shake it from time to time when it burnt low, while a few rush-lights dotted about on the tables cast their flickering beams across the vault-like chamber, whose farther recesses concealed heaps of dirt and refuse both animate and inanimate. As soon as the well-known figure of the chief appeared at the top of the steps, a number of girls rushed towards him and gave him a boisterous welcome. One sweet voice dominated the rest, and its owner, a girl of remarkable beauty, was the first to reach Cadocu and throw her arms round his neck.

"Hola, you scoundrels! do you want all your heads breaking?"

"Good evening, Catherine, my beauty!" he said affectionately.

"Are you going to dance and sing now?" she asked eagerly.

"Not just yet, my lass; we must drink a little first, for I've got to talk business with this gentleman here, so, my dears, you must be quiet for a little while."

The wild troop dispersed into the other parts of the building, and though it could not be called quiet, still there was less noise than when first they had entered.

François Gauthier, the master of this unruly establishment, was a powerfully built, red-faced man between fifty and sixty.

He nodded to Cadocu and asked what wine he should bring.

"A flagon for me," said Antoine.

"Shall I bring two goblets?"

"One is enough," replied Montruel curtly.

"He doesn't drink much, then," grumbled the host to himself, then turning to Cadocu, he added meaningly:

"Look here, friend Antoine, the King has encouraged all sorts of lazy fellows and spies in the city, and everyone knows there are swarms of them about."

Montruel sat with his head erect, humming a drinking song to himself, and seeming to take no heed of the fellow's insolence.

"Never mind, François, you go and get my wine and leave this gentleman to manage his own affairs. Upon my soul, he was not far wrong either, my lord," he added when the host had left them. "However, I think a little less badly of you than I did, for I noticed you turned pale when you came into my den."

"If I did so it was because my nose is not used to such foul air and filthy smells. But let us get through our business as quickly as possible."

"If the King has chosen him, he must be worth something," thought Cadocu. "Ah! here comes the wine! Now I'm at your service, my lord."

CHAPTER VIII.

Madame Agnes Receives an Invitation.

Montruel was sitting with both his elbows on the table, and if he did not show fear, he certainly betrayed unmistakeable signs of embarrassment; in fact, he seemed quite at a loss how to begin his unpleasant task, but at last he jerked out:

"I have come to you from the Queen."

"Which Queen?"

"I speak of Madame Agnes, of course!"

"Oh, indeed! So you call *her* the Queen, do you? Well, the Council will set all that straight for us. I half suspected that you came from Madame Agnes. What does she want with me?"

"She wants to see you."

"Ah, she shows her good taste. I was just thinking I should like to see her myself."

Montruel's face became livid, and he drove his nails into the palms of his hands to prevent himself from doing violence to this man. The one ruling passion of his life was love for Agnes de Méranie. Anything that touched her cut him to the quick, and there was a contemptuous ring in Cadocu's voice that made his blood boil.

"Then it will not be difficult to arrange," he said in a hard, constrained tone.

"Probably not. You made a fool of yourself over the other Agnes because she was like Madame de Méranie, so

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you can understand that I have a fancy to see the Queen, as you call her, because she's like the poor dead girl I was fond of."

The noise at the other end of the room had become deafening, men were shouting, women shrieking, metal drinking cups were being flung upon the floor as soon as emptied, while ominous groans came from several who would gladly have quitted the scene if anyone could have been found to carry them.

"Hola, you scoundrels! do you all want your heads breaking? I told you to be quiet for a time, and the time's not up yet!" shouted Cadocu in his stentorian voice, enforced by the banging of his empty flagon on the table.

This little diversion gave Montruel time to recover from the last nasty remark, so he went on coldly:

"As the Queen wishes to see you, and you wish to see her, my task is done. She awaits you now at my house."

"At *your* house? *Parbleu!* then King Philip has not such sharp eyes as men give him credit for!" said Cadocu jeeringly.

"Answer me! Will you come?"

The Captain of the Free-lances bent forward and whispered a few words into Montruel's ear, which must have been of unparalleled insolence, for he started to his feet as if he had been stung, and strode towards the door without sign or sound.

Cadocu went off into a roar of laughter, and, holding his sides, rocked to and fro on his chair.

"I've hit him hard this time!" he chuckled. "I just touched his soft spot, the mean cur! Stop, my lord," he called to Montruel. "You've not given me your answer; but if you think better of it, you'll find me here till daybreak, getting more drunk every hour."

No answer was vouchsafed to him, so he turned to the girls, saying:

"Now, my beauties, the fun begins! You can dance, sing, drink, shout, fight, or make love if you like, so long as you're jolly. Here, Catherine, my sweetheart, fetch me another cup of wine."

Agnes de Méranie, the chosen wife of Philip Augustus, King of France, was alone in the house of Amaury Montruel, sitting in the very room where he had given audience to La Fontanelle, and where Agnes the Fair had betrayed the fatal knowledge that had proved her own undoing.

She had been waiting some time for Amaury's return, and her mobile features wore an expression of feverish impatience.

"What would the King say?" she murmured. "He is waiting for me, looking for me, and—perhaps already suspecting me!"

She shuddered at this last thought, but it was only for a second, and she went on with a complacent smile:

"What matter if he did? I could throw dust in his eyes easily enough! And even if he were jealous, he would only love me the more."

She was lying back in Amaury's favourite chair, with every nerve strained to catch the first sound of approaching footsteps. Her dark eyes shone dangerously in the dim lamp-light, and the strong, fierce passions, which she generally contrived to conceal under a mask of playful coquetry, were now having full play in face and figure. She was like a young lioness watching for her prey.

The church clocks struck nine. Her restlessness increased.

"He has not come yet, and the Porte St. Honoré will be closed. How shall I get back into the Louvre, or explain my absence? The fool! what can he be doing?"

She began to walk about the room, working her fingers convulsively, and muttering imprecations upon her tardy messenger. Suddenly she stopped, and, thinking someone was coming, she pushed aside a heavy curtain and entered a small, luxuriously appointed room, in which hung a large polished steel mirror. It was evident that Madame Agnes was no stranger in this house of Amaury Montruel.

Pushed aside a heavy curtain.

Taking up a small lamp, she began to arrange her somewhat disordered toilet, pausing now and then to study some pose of head or hand, some attitude which displayed her womanly charms to advantage; and the study of herself, now unadorned by any jewel, seemed to thrill her with pride and sensuous delight.

"He will not be able to resist me! This uncouth soldier shall succumb to my beauty, and leave this house as much my slave as is its master!"

Still no one came. And the mysterious fear of her rival's unseen power began to torment her.

"If Mahmoud dare not kill her, this Cadocu shall do it at my bidding. I *will* be Queen in spite of her, and all the thunders of the Church! And when I am once acknowledged, my hand shall fall heavily on those who have dared to slight me. Amaury Montruel has served me well, but—what shall I do with him then? I shall not want him any longer, and he might be inconvenient, he loses his head sometimes. Well, many a one has broken the ladder by which he has scaled the wall, and—they are wise to do so. They say he killed that girl because she knew his secret—he knows mine—what if I follow his example?"

A door banged, and hasty steps were heard coming towards the room.

"At last!" she said, "they are coming."

Montruel flung open the door and entered alone. He crossed to where she was sitting. His face was white and drawn, his eyes looked glassy, and though his lips moved, no sound came from them.

"Well?" she asked angrily. "Can't you speak? Speak! I tell you!" she almost shrieked, stamping her foot.

"Why have you come alone? By the saints! I believe you've dared to disobey me!"

At last the answer came in a low, strained voice:

"No, madame, I have seen him."

"And you told him I desired to see him?"

"I said the Queen desired his presence."

"And yet he is not here! Amaury, you are lying to me!" she exclaimed savagely. "I am a woman, and I saw the look he gave me. He would not refuse! You are lying, I tell you again."

Base and degraded as he was, Amaury Montruel blushed for this woman he loved so madly, and who was so lost to all sense of shame for herself. He turned from her almost in disgust.

"Answer me, sir; did he refuse or not?"

"For your sake, madame, I had rather a thousand times that he had refused."

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"Then he has not refused after all? Why did you torture me so, Amaury? It was cruel of you," she added with a swift change of manner.

"But he is not coming."

Her brows contracted again, and her fingers plucked at the lace on her dress till she had torn it to shreds.

Montruel had not been afraid of Codocu, but he quailed before Agnes de Méranie.

"Listen, my Queen," he said pleadingly, "and you shall hear all, if you desire, but I would gladly have spared you the details of this hateful interview."

She made a sign of acquiescence, and he sat down opposite her. With manifest reluctance, he told her all that had happened since they had parted, even to Cadocu's insulting remarks about her being where she was at that minute. He told her of the man's insolent wish to see her, at which her eyes brightened, and then he hesitated. His lips would not utter the final insult with which he had been stung; but she interrupted him by:

"I guess what's coming."

Amaury looked at her in open-eyed wonderment. There was no trace of anger in her face, she was brimming over with merriment. Would he never know this woman?

"The saucy knave said he would not come to me, but I might go to him! Isn't that it?" she asked, rubbing her hands.

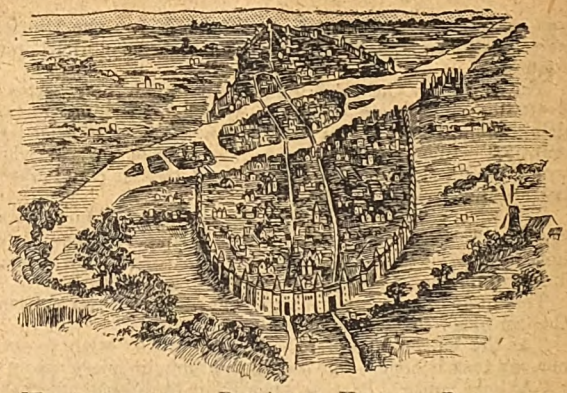
"That is not all, Madame, it is worse than that."

"Worse than that? Well, then, I give it up! Tell me quickly—I am sick of this suspense!"

"Madame," he resumed gravely, "I am sure you will share my anger when I tell you that Antoine does not await you in his own house—and that would have been bad enough, Heaven knows—but, at least, there would have been some privacy. No, he dare to ask the Queen of France to pollute her feet by crossing the threshold of the filthy den where he and his ribald crew hold their drunken revels!"

Agnes sprang to her feet and seized her ermine mantle.

His hands fell to his sides, and his breath came in quick, short gasps.



[The above is a Bird's-eye View of Paris under Philip Augustus during the period at which the events mentioned in this story take place.—Ed.]

Montruel continued, feeling thankful that at last her pride was roused:

"In that loathsome, reeking tavern of St. Landry, full of foul-mouthed wretches and the off-scourings of the earth."

She had fastened her mantle and was preparing to leave the house as he continued to dilate upon the horrors he had witnessed.

"Are you ready, my Queen?" he asked tenderly, with a proud glance at her resolute face. "May I have the honour of conducting you to the Louvre?"

She gave a short, hard laugh, and said mockingly:

"You may have the honour of conducting me to the St. Landry tavern, my lord!"

Amaury staggered back as if she had struck him. His hands fell to his sides, and his breath came in quick, short gasps.

"Come, come, Sir Amaury; we are losing time. You have painted the picture in such glowing colours that I am quite anxious to see it for myself. You shall take me there, and while I am amusing myself with Captain Cadocu, you shall keep watch for me outside the door, so your delicate senses will not be outraged by the foul sights and smells!"

She turned to the door, and he had no choice but to follow her. They traversed the narrow, filthy streets in silence, for her brain was busy weaving schemes of conquest, and his heart was heavy with shame and torn by conflicting pangs of jealousy and love for the woman he could not even yet wholly despise.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE BARON'S LOVE STORY.

A True Tale of the Guiana Hinterland.

The incidents I am about to relate occurred in the year 1815. The strange disappearance of the young Baron von Halsbeck did not attract so much attention as it would have done under ordinary circumstances, because the colony was engaged at the time in speculating on European affairs; and the news of the Baron having been lost in the bush arrived in Georgetown on the very day on which a vessel from Barbados brought the news of the battle of Waterloo, and the breaking, once for all, of Napoleon's power.

The Baron was one of a party of orchid-hunters. He became separated from his companions during a terrible storm and was regarded as lost. The narrative of his adventures were set forth in a worm-eaten manuscript now in the possession of a member of the family.

After a long description of the storm, and his futile endeavours to find his companions, the narrative is continued in the following manner.

THE NARRATIVE OF BARON VON HALSBECK.

Worn out with hunger and fatigue, and disheartened by the knowledge that I was hopelessly separated from my party, I made a rough couch of dry leaves and forest tangle, and lay down to sleep. I was awakened by a small piece of wood striking me on the chest, and, on opening my eyes, I saw standing in front of me, about twenty paces distant, a short, thick-set Indian, who was watching me with the greatest interest.

He continued to stare at me as I rose and brushed away a few leaves that clung to my clothes, but on my trying to approach him he bounded away with great speed. Fortunately, I was more or less acquainted with several Indian dialects, and I was able to make myself understood.

"Do not be afraid," I said; "I am not come to hurt you; I am lost, and desire food."

"Whence come you?" he answered.

"For fifty days I have journeyed from the sea, and now I am lost, and am alone."

"What do you seek here?"

"I seek but to see your country and go my way again."

After saying this, I took off my belt to which were attached my pistols and threw it behind me, with the object of reassuring the man; but he took no notice of my action, and I concluded that he had never before seen firearms.

"Follow me," the man said.

I picked up my belt and made to catch up with him, but he waved me back, and so I kept about twenty paces behind him. We travelled thus for about three hours, the man continually looking behind him to see that I was not getting too close to him.

At length we came to a spot where a rocky plateau with precipitous sides barred further progress. The man faced me and told me to remain where I was until he returned.

He then skirted round the base of the plateau, and was soon out of sight.

I sat down on a fallen tree-trunk and waited. After about an hour the man returned, accompanied by two other men, one very old and the other a heavy, muscular fellow about thirty years of age. This last one was armed with a large wooden club. The three men were clothed alike, in a belt of some rough material woven out of grass.

On seeing me, the new-comers showed great signs of astonishment, and a short argument took place between them and my discoverer.

Presently my conductor addressed me.

"Say, will you come with us, or shall we give you food and let you depart? If you come with us there is no going back."

This strange offer excited my curiosity, and, depending on my ingenuity to extricate me from any position I might subsequently be placed in, I replied:

"Take me with you to your people. I am content."

They blindfolded me with leaves, and the muscular man took my hand and led me. We marched for about an hour by circuitous paths, and crossed two streams, the

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one coming up to our knees and the other up to our waists. At length, after making a sharp and difficult ascent, we walked for about ten minutes on level ground, and then the bandage was taken from my eyes.

A curious scene presented itself. I stood in the midst of a circle of small houses, about twenty in number, inclosing an open space free of all weeds and grass, and trodden quite smooth and hard. In the centre of this space was a large rock about ten feet high, in the form of a rude four-sided column; it was covered with curious figures and signs deeply cut into its surface.

I was led to a small house, and was given to understand that it was intended for my own use. Later on, food was brought me—roast flesh and cassava bread. During the course of the day I moved freely about the village, and found that the people spoke a dialect with which I was acquainted. Towards evening I felt inclined to walk in the woods, and, taking one of the two paths which led through the village, I followed it. Before I had gone a hundred yards I was met by a man who pointed to the village and told me to return. He would listen to no argument, but threatened to kill me if I did not go back. It was evident that I was a prisoner.

At night-time a lighted torch was brought into my house, and a young girl fetched me food and water. This girl was called Bian, and during the whole of my captivity she waited on me. She was always at hand, now silent, now full of interesting talk about her people.

I found out exactly how I was situated. The people among whom I had fallen were called Barawois, and were the remnant of a once powerful tribe. Many years before, the tribe, which at that time lived about a hundred miles south-east of its present station, had been set upon by strange Indians, and, with the exception of about forty persons, entirely destroyed. This remnant, after many hardships, had at length discovered the spot which was still its home, and had continued to live there entirely cut off from the world. They worshipped a graven image, and offered up human sacrifices to it.

Each year two virgins were set aside and confined in a special house. One of these were destined to be offered up as a sacrifice. The girls were set aside on the day following the annual ceremony, and were treated with the greatest care after their withdrawal from the rest of the tribe. Should either of the girls die during the year, the remaining one was sacrificed; if both were alive on the day preceding the sacrifice, the choice was made in a manner I will describe later. The one whose fortune it was to be rejected, resumed her ordinary life in the tribe.

The victim was offered up in the following way: She was given a bunch of brilliant flowers, and holding this in one hand, was led by the chief of the tribe to the side of the river. Arrived there, a tree trunk was thrown across to the small ledge where the burnt sacrifice was daily offered up, and along this the girl passed. She then walked out to the small point of rock at the edge of the chasm, and stood with her back to the statue while the preparations were being made.

The mode of sacrifice was very strange. A large stone was secured in a sling of grass-rope, the ends of the sling being fastened to tree stumps on either side of the river.

The centre of this sling was braced up by a rope, which was fastened round the beckoning hand of the statue. As the tree stumps were situated some distance further down stream than the statue, the stone, on being released, swung outward, with great force, and precipitated the victim into the awful abyss beyond.

The way of releasing this horrid messenger of death was also strange. A fire, consisting of twenty-four sticks, was lighted under the rope which held back the stone, and it was at the moment that the fire burnt through the rope sufficiently to allow the strain to tear it apart that the victim was hurled into the chasm. There was just a possibility that the fire would not burn through the rope. In the event of this occurring the girl was taken back into the tribe and given the curious privilege of choosing any man in the tribe for her husband, being treated moreover with the greatest consideration for the rest of her days.

That day I learnt that I should not be allowed to depart, lest I betrayed their hiding place; that I must become one of them and marry one of their maidens.

I settled down among these people with a conviction that I would be able to make my escape as soon as it no longer suited me to remain with them. But as the weeks passed it became evident to me that nothing short of a miracle would enable me to leave the tribe. Sentinels were posted at the only places where descent from the plateau was thought possible, and only on one occasion in the year—the evening of the great sacrifice—were these men ever absent from their posts, and then it was but for half an hour. To this must be added the fact that I was in an unknown country and unprovided with a guide or the necessary stock of food.

One evening, as I passed the house of the two girls chosen for the next sacrifice, I saw one of them. The girl was, I should judge, about seventeen years of age. Her form was of the most perfect symmetry, slender and graceful and full of the most delicate, tender lines, giving her whole figure an air of gentle, budding womanhood, charming beyond the power of words to express. Her face was not less pleasing than her form. Her eyes were large and set well apart, her forehead low and broad, her nose small and slightly aquiline. Her mouth was exquisitely shaped. Add to this, long, coarse, black hair, a skin of a rich golden-brown colour, and you have before you Opaie, the sacrifice.

That night I questioned Bian about the girl I had seen.

"She of whom you speak is my sister Opaie," she said. "She is a virgin set aside for sacrifice."

"My people," I said, "when they see a woman like that, reserve for her a better fate than that she should be offered up to please a graven image whose eyes are blind and who knows naught of the beauty of woman."

"Well, Kaboot, (white man) it may be that the other one, Malkoona, will be chosen."

"And then Opaie would be free?"

"She would be free, but the chief Petarie, would then take her for his wife. I know his heart in the matter."

"But I, Bian, have other plans for thy sister, and it shall be seen who is stronger, I or thy chief Petarie."

But Bian laughed at me and said: "Kaboot, thou art indeed a fool, for all thy fair skin and golden hair."

But a fixed determination had seized me. If I was indeed to remain all my life among these people, I would, at any cost, have Opaie for my wife.

From the day on which I saw Opaie I sought every opportunity of speaking with her. I had become fairly proficient in the language of the Barawois, and so by using great precautions I succeeded in establishing an understanding with Opaie. As the months passed I was

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fortunately able to win Bian over to my plans, and she promised to help me in any way she could when the time came.

Opaie was by no means so indifferent to her fate as her sister had represented her to be when I had first spoken on the subject to her. And at last, after much careful thought, we arranged a plan, the successful carrying out of which would set Opaie free and leave me master of the situation.

The plan which we eventually decided on was this: If Malkoona did not die (Opaie's death was never thought of, so far removed did death seem from such perfection of life), then the selection of victims would take place. If Malkoona were chosen, well and good. In that case, I was to shoot Petarie (I had powder and shot in my belt, which had not been taken from me) and rely on the effect produced by my pistol to insure my subsequent safety.

If, on the other hand, Opaie was chosen, the position would be far more serious. The Barawois were intensely superstitious, and no pistol-shots would save the victim from the sacrifice. Strategy was the only method which offered any hopes of success if Opaie were chosen as the victim.

There was the chance, of course, that the wood might not burn, but in the event of it showing signs of becoming consumed, we arranged with Bian that, at a signal from me, she was to cause a diversion from the business in hand by raising a great outcry on the other side of the village, calling out that strangers were attacking the place, and Opaie and I, profiting by the confusion that would ensue, were to make away to a spot fixed upon by Bian, who knew the country round the base of the plateau very well. Bian was to join us at this post as soon as possible, and we would then make the best of our way to the civilised country.

Slowly the months passed, and at length the time for the annual sacrifice drew near. On the day which was to see the selections of the victims, I was in a state of almost unendurable suspense, and it seemed to me that the evening would never come. However, about five in the afternoon, the loud blowing of conch shells told me that the time had arrived when I would have to begin the carrying out of my schemes. I will not enter into the details of the ceremony of choosing; I cannot bear to think of my feverish anxiety, even now.

Opaie was the chosen victim!

Sleep, of course, was impossible, and I lay awake thinking over the position. Up to that time I had been in a most excited state, but later on the position became terribly complicated by a succession of entirely unforeseen circumstances, and I have to thank that day for many a grey hair.

Nothing occurred during the early part of the day, and in the afternoon I went down to the river-side to watch the preparations. When I arrived on the scene the stone was being fixed in the sling. As I stood there, the only idle one among so many, I noticed something floating down the river.

When it came close to me I saw that it was a piece of newspaper! It passed so close to the bank that there was no chance of my being mistaken. I was so intensely surprised at the strange messenger of civilisation that I nearly cried out. No one else noticed the fragment, and in a moment it was swept over the fall.

There was only one explanation of the presence of this piece of printed paper, and that was the existence of some party of explorers, who must have made the ascent of the northern face of the plateau and were following the stream down. As the northern extremity of the plateau was considered unscalable by the Barawois, no sentinel was placed there; and if the party were engaged as I conjectured, they would be able to approach quite close to the village without being discovered, provided they were observing the ordinary precautions of bush travellers.

The question for me to consider was this: How far away was this party at the moment? They might be within a mile or two, or they might be half a day's journey off. In any case I must find means of communicating with them. Supposing anything went wrong with my plans, and Opaie and I were compelled to make a bolt for our lives, we should have a splendid chance of getting back to civilisation.

And now I was brought face to face with a very serious difficulty. I could easily write a note on a piece of *rapulo* (a kind of fine bark) and despatch Bian up the river with it, as she would not be stopped by the sentinels. But if I did this, and she did not return before the sacrifice, I should be in an extremely awkward position, as Bian would not be there to create a diversion while I rescued Opaie.

After thinking the matter over, I decided to risk it. The party of explorers, even if they did not arrive in time to stop the sacrifice, would at any rate hurry up, and might be counted on to put in an appearance within a few hours, and it was possible that I might delay the sacrifice, by some means or other, long enough to allow them time to get on the scene.

There was no time to be lost, so I went to my house and explained the matter to Bian. She at once grasped the situation and I sent her off with a note to the exploring party.

As the afternoon closed I was almost sick with the intense mental strain to which I was being subjected. When the time arrived, I armed myself with my pistols and hunting-knife and went down to the river-side, taking up my stand close to one of the stumps to which the sling was fastened.

Soon afterwards I heard the procession approaching, and in a few moments it came in sight. Petarie led the way, and a few paces behind came Opaie, bearing in her hand the brilliant flowers used on such occasions. She looked very troubled and anxious, and I took an opportunity, when no one was looking my way, to give her a smile of encouragement, though I was ill at ease. Opaie was led out immediately and stepped on to the ledge of the rock more firmly than I dared to hope. She stood there in that awful place, with the evening light playing about her exquisite form—a vision of loveliness.

The preparations went on. The stone was braced back and secured to the hand of the image. Then this thing happened:

The man who was carrying the bundle of sticks across to the base of the statue suddenly stumbled, and in righting himself dropped the whole of them into the water.

I was horror-struck, and waited breathlessly for the next move. Would they put off the sacrifice till the next day in order that a fresh set of sticks might be exposed in the usual way, or would they consider this as an indication that the victim was to be spared? There was a short consultation, and then a man left the crowd and made off in the direction of the village.

I determined to allow as much time as possible to pass before I took the affair into my own hands. Not

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until the fire was lighted would I give any sign. If it came to that point, I would cut my side of the sling, thus putting Opaie out of immediate danger, and then act as circumstances might direct.

I was engaged in trying to work out the situation when the man who had gone to the village returned, bringing with him a fresh bundle of sticks. So the sacrifice was to go on! I glanced round at Opaie. She was standing erect, it seemed from her bearing that she was gaining hope from the delay.

The bundle of sticks was laid, and the fire lighted, and the first little puff of smoke rose in the air. There was no danger for a couple of minutes longer. I determined to count fifty and then cut the rope.

I felt my pistols—forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three—my knife—forty-four, forty-five, forty-six—

At this moment I heard on the other side of the village a great shout and the din of fire-arms, and above all, Bian's shrill voice crying out for help.

The Barawois, struck with astonishment, rushed off at once in the direction of the outcries. In an instant I cut the sling, and, seeing the stone fall harmlessly in the stream, gave a shout of encouragement to Opaie, and then dashed off to the scene of action. The Barawois had no chance from the first, and, after a very short fight, the affair was at an end.

When everything quieted down and the Barawois were placed under guard, I returned to the river-side to fetch Opaie. She had walked to the foot of the statue, and then, overcome by the terrible mental strain of the ordeal, had fainted. She lay on her back, and so narrow was the place, that her feet were in the water on one side, and on the other her long hair was trailing in the stream.

We got her safely to the bank, and then I took her in my arms and carried her into my house, where Bian was waiting for us.

This is the end of the Baron's narrative, but the subsequent events were related by his nephew.

It appears that the Baron and his rescuers (a large party of English explorers) returned to the coast through Venezuela, and that the Baron left Opaie in charge of a certain lady in Caracas. Bian remained with her people.

This lady was of good family, and was the wife of a Spanish merchant named Luis de Gayangos. The Baron then returned to Europe, set his affairs in good order, and some months later returned to Caracas. Here a severe disappointment awaited him. No trace of Luis de Gayangos could be found. The family had gone to to La Guayra and the business of Luis de Gayangos had been finished some months before the Baron's arrival. After spending some time in vain endeavours to find Opaie the Baron finally returned to Europe a disappointed man.

Some years later, Opaie's fate became known. During the war which ended in the adoption of the constitution of Columbia, with Simon Boliver "El Liberador," as President, the Spanish merchant, Luis de Gayangos, fell under suspicion of being in active co-operation with the patriots, and, in order to save himself from being arrested by the royalist troops, he fled to the town of Tunja in Columbia. In June, 1819, the battle of that name was fought. After a severe fight Boliver was victorious, but not without the loss of many men.

When the engagement was at its height, Opaie, who had imprudently gone out into a narrow street parallel to the main thoroughfare, was struck by a stray bullet and killed. So she but escaped death at the hand of savages to meet it among civilised folk.

Erko Mann.

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Ya-Ling, The Willow-Tree, and The Golden Lilies.

Ya-Ling was the only son of his Mother, and he loved her dearly. He was Head Man of the village of Happy Flowers, and had many rice fields. His house was guarded with a screen of fruit-trees and behind it the Willow-trees kept away all bad fairies. Now his Mother was old and childish, and the time was come for him to be in sorrow and alone.

Her last words to him were:

"Dear son Ya-ling, seek *the Willow-tree* and the *Golden Lilies*."

And Ya-ling, though he was wise in the village, was not wise at home, so he did not understand her. But he was anxious to please her, so he promised to do as she said, and when the days of his mourning were ended, he thought of his promise. His rice was all planted, his fruit-trees were covered with beautiful flowers. The village was prosperous and the people were happy. So Ya-ling went to the hill top behind the fields where dwelt an old hermit. He could not have gone had not the village been in good order, because he was Head Man and had to look after it. As it was, his journey was a long one. But in three days he reached the top of Nan-ping, and he saw the Old Man of the Mountain sitting on a stone outside his cave. A willow waved its branches overhead, and by his side was a pool of water, on whose surface floated some beautiful lilies. How delighted Ya-ling was when he saw them!

He made reverence to the Old Man and said:

"Oh, Old Man of Nan-ping, be good enough to give me a branch of the Willow-tree and two Golden Lilies."

And the Old Man answered:

"When two men in your village both grown grain in one field and are contented; when the learned man shall know how little he knows; *then* you shall have a Willow-branch."

"And how about the lilies, sir?" said Ya-ling.

"One thing at one time," said the Old Man.

So Ya-ling went back to the village.

The day after he got home, he called two neighbours of his and said:

"Neighbours, I give you one of my rice fields; you are both to sow grain in it and be content. If you quarrel, you will have to give it to me back again."

The neighbours thanked him many times, and Ya-ling said to himself when they were gone:

"That is a good idea; they are not likely to quarrel over the ground they don't pay for."

Next day, as he passed through the village, he saw some children playing, and he watched the game. The trees hid him from the children, who were too intent on their game to notice him. One tall lad called two others, and said:

"I am the Head Man, and I give you a rice-field. As long as you do not quarrel, I will give it you."

All the other children laughed, for the boy spoke in a gruff voice, just as if he were a big man.

Then one of the boys to whom he had spoken said:

"Sir, please how can we both sow, and not quarrel? How shall we decide which is our part of the field?"

The pretended Head Man looked so puzzled, that the other children shouted with laughter.

Then the lad said:

"I did not bargain to answer hard questions. Our real Head Man was not asked anything of the sort, and I don't believe he could have answered if they had asked him."

"You *are* cross," said one of the boys; "but don't you think Ming-sa would know?"

"I'll go and ask her," said the other, and he ran off into a garden near by.

Soon he came back with a smile on his face. Calling the pretended neighbours before him, he said:

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"Look you, friends, divide between yourselves the rice field. Let each take half, then you will be at peace. As for me, I am a fool, but I still am a worthy Head Man, for it takes Wisdom to know Folly!"

"Ming-sa is right!" shouted the children; and they were so pleased at this happy ending to their game that they never saw Ya-ling slip away.

He was delighted with what he had heard. And when next morning the two real neighbours came before him grumbling and quarrelling, he decided between them as Ming-sa advised. The children rather wondered when they heard, and Ming-sa, who lived by her father's rice field, with her younger brothers and sisters, was astonished. But as she said nothing about it, the villagers put the wise words down to the Head Man's credit, and thought more of him than ever.

So Ya-ling went to claim the Willow-branch, and the Old Man of the Mountain kept his word and gave it him. Then Ya-ling asked for the Lilies.

"Nay, my son," said the Old Man, "only the truthful tongue can own them; if I gave them to you they would fade."

"I don't see why," said Ya-ling.

The Old Man's voice grew very grave. He stooped and picked two of the Golden Blooms.

"Take them," he said; "but do not think they will be pleasant to your eyes till you own the cheat by which you gained the Willow-branch."

"What do you mean?" stammered Ya-ling in great confusion.

"I mean," said the Old Man, "the lie you told when you decided the quarrel between your neighbours. Did you not pretend that it was your wisdom, so that all the village might praise you? Shame on you, miserable man that you are! Do you let Ming-sa toil all day, and then must needs steal her wisdom too!"

Poor Ya-ling was terribly frightened at these words.

"What shall I do?" he cried. "I did not mean to do any harm, I never thought——"

"So I should suppose! Well, take the Lilies, but *remember*, until you see them with Ming-sa's eyes, the sight of them will be dreadful to you. And until then, do not dare to part with them, for if you do you shall die."

Ya-ling sorrowfully obeyed. He took the Lilies and the Branch, and went back to his village. There he planted the Branch, and it made a fine tree just by the gate of his house.

But the Lilies he hated; for every time he looked at them their colour looked different, and every night in his dreams they seemed close beside him.

At last the Lilies worried his stupid head so much that he became thin and worn-looking, and the villagers noticed it. The children heard their parents speak of it too. As the days went by Ya-ling grew worse, and could walk no farther than his garden gate.

One day, as he sat there in the shade of a mango tree, Ming-sa passed by with her baby sister. In the gateway stood a willow, and here they stopped to rest a bit. They did not see Ya-ling.

"Is this where the sick man is?" said the little one.

"Yes," said Ming-sa sorrowfully. "He is a good man. I wish I could make him well."

"Would you give him your eyes and your hands?" said her sister.

"What a funny child you are!" said Ming-sa. "It is time we went home now."

"But *would you*?" said the child earnestly.

Ming-sa thought a minute.

"Yes," she said, "if father and mother would let me; you see, he is

Ming-sa passed with her baby sister.

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kind, if he is not very wise, and the people love him."

Ya-ling was glad when he heard that. If he was not very wise he knew what he wanted, so he sent in haste for Ming-sa's father and he said:

"Honoured neighbour, your daughter is wise and virtuous; let me have her for my wife."

And Ming-sa's father agreed.

Not long after, Ming-sa came to her new home.

And the first thing Ya-ling did was to tell her how he had learnt his wise speech to his neighbours. The next thing he did was to show her the Lilies. But he did not look himself. "They are on the shelf," he said. So Ming-sa went to see what they were like.

"Oh!" she cried, "how golden they are! Dear husband, look at them once again. They are so lovely."

And to please her, he did. Then a cry of joy broke from his lips.

"I can see them," he said, and he cried with delight.

Just then they heard some one knocking.

"Come in," cried Ming-sa-ling.

And in came the Old Man of the Mountain.

Ya-ling ran eagerly up to him,

"Sir," he cried, "I can see their beauty, but I don't understand why!"

"My son," said the Old Man, "I knew and loved your mother, and I bade her give you that last command. "You are stupid, but Ming-sa is wise. You have lied, but she is truthful. You are rich in goods and she in virtue. But you are willing to share and so is she. That makes things right and just. She gives you her hands and eyes; do you give her your trust?"

"Indeed I will," said Ya-ling.

"Her feet are Golden Lilies, her form is like the Willow. They are the things you need. Leave to the solitary the magic charms, content yourself with the real."

The Old Man vanished with these last words and the Lilies disappeared too. The Willow faded and soon died. But Ya-ling did not mind. His Ming-sa was Lilies and Willow to him and he never wanted any other.

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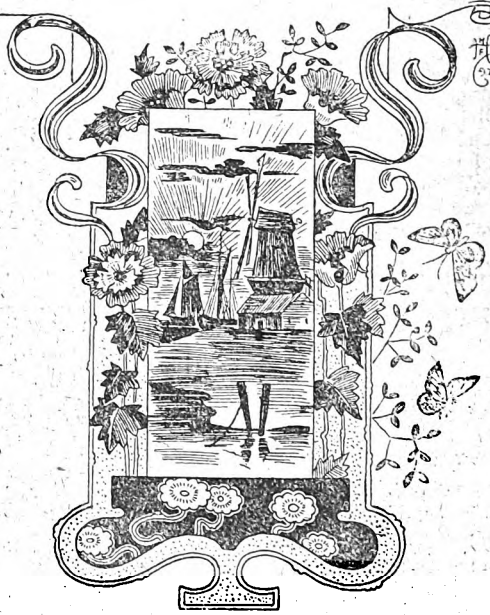
James and John and Two Pretty Girls.



James Reade was sitting in the garden, ostensibly reading, but in reality turning over in his mind a serious matter which had worried him and his brother for some weeks, when suddenly an inspiration came to him.

It seemed so simple and promising, and withal so scientific, that he was sure it was just what they needed. In his haste to tell John about it he gathered his books up in his arms and fairly ran to the house. He thrust one book, open, under the nose of the astonished John, who was deep in the mysteries of his microscope.

"There!" said James, glowing with triumphant pleasure. "Read that! I think you will find that it contains a suggestion how we may find out what Miss Vail's feelings are towards you!"

John read the following, slowly, and with an occasional pause:

"'Just as a watch is influenced by an electric current, so is it acted upon by the nervous temperament of a human being. The demonstrations of this have generally been confined to the watches of women, not only owing to their greater degree of nervous force, but also because a man's watch does not come into such direct contact with it. Most women thrust their watches in front of their dresses where they are placed in close proximity to the heart. When the wearer is excited, the quickening of the nervous current communicates itself to the delicate mechanisms of the watch and produces similar quickening of the machinery, thereby causing the watch to gain time. In like manner, when a person is depressed, and her nervous current running sluggishly, it has a retarding effect upon the watch, and causes it to lose time in exact proportion to the amount of the wearer's depression. It is a fact well known even outside scientific circles, that a woman's watch is rarely correct.'"

John finished reading. Simultaneously he and James leant back, took off their glasses, which they began to polish, and beamed at each other.

"James," said John, "I always told you that you showed genius in applying your knowledge."

John Reade and James his younger brother were wealthy bachelors, who had never found it necessary to go into business. Ever since they had left college twenty years before, they had merely gratified their fondness for study and scientific research. They never became more than amateurs, for they were interested in too many branches to pursue any one experiment to its practical end.

Everyone liked the two brothers; they were gentle, kindly, and sympathetic, and if they chose to busy themselves with useless, unremunerative study, nobody cared.

Their lives had heretofore been peaceful and quiet, but recently a new element had entered, one which threatened great disturbance. John had made the most startling discovery of his life—that he was in love. It seemed to give him more importance in his own eyes and to invest him with a certain romantic charm. He polished his spectacles, patted his hair a little and looked in the glass. It seemed to him that his appearance was more youthful. He was only forty odd, but he had not noticed that his sister's children were growing up. The adored was over thirty, so that—well, they were both in the prime of life, neither too old nor too young.

Mr. Reade had confided all to his brother, and had been pleasantly excited by the awe with which it caused James to regard him. Such a thing was so foreign to their habits that it astounded these simple gentlemen. The fact that John was a victim of this strange malady made him quite a hero.

"But the question is, James," John had said uneasily, "having discovered I am in love, what is to be done next?"

It was indeed a question. How was John to find out the state of Miss Vail's feelings towards him?

"I am afraid," James had replied, after a long pause, "that perhaps we were wrong to neglect these things when we were younger. If we had only had a little experience now!"

"I had begun to fear so myself," said John. "Lucy's boys would find no such difficulty, I am sure. But, dear me, I don't think they had much experience."

"No, I've never observed anything," said James.

John continued.

"Still, it is strange, when you think of it, how many have married. It had never occurred to me before that they must have proposed."

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"I wonder—do you think," began James, "these things in the comic papers say—about leap year?"

For just a second Mr. Reade's mild face lighted up with hope, but it was only a passing gleam.

"Of course, I don't know," he said, "but I should be inclined to doubt that a lady would really propose to a man. I never inquired whether these jokes were founded on fact. However, I scarcely think Miss Vail would do so; the next leap year is two years off. I should hardly like to wait so long on a chance.

"If I were quite sure that Miss Vail would look favourably upon my suit," he continued, "I think I could manage to put the question. But it would be most embarrassing to be refused, and I have no way of ascertaining her feelings."

Miss Vail and her sister Kitty were making a long visit to Mrs. Burton, *née* Reade. The ladies necessarily saw a good deal of Mr. Reade, and he had fallen in love with Miss Vail, while at the same time it looked as if one or both of Mrs. Burton's sons would become a victim to the charms of the younger sister before the summer was over.

Miss Vail enjoyed talking with Mr. Reade and hearing his opinions of the discoveries of the day. That much he could see, but his accustomed eyes could detect no difference in her treatment of him from that which she accorded her other friends, and further complications arose from his fear that his nephew would discover how things were, if he were to pay Miss Vail any little attention.

John was therefore in a frame of mind to seize upon any suggestion, and his brother was equally disturbed and most anxious to help him. So when the idea of the watch presented itself, it seemed to them Heaven-sent. John was filled with admiration for James's cleverness, and James glowed with pleasure at John's appreciation.

"We must be discreet," said James, after the first excitement had subsided. "I think we ought to have a watch made for the purpose, for, of course, the more delicate the works are, the more easily they will be affected."

"Precisely," said John. "I will go to the watch-maker's myself to-morrow and order a special one to be made."

The amount of talking and planning these two did that day! Not only all the afternoon, but in the evening again, until James found, to his astonishment, that it was after midnight, and betook himself to bed. But Mr. Reade feared that he was somewhat excited and would be unable to sleep, so he said he would read a little to rest his brain.

The very air of the study seemed charged with mystery and importance during the time necessary for the construction of the watch. John and James forsook their books for hours at a time to rehearse their plans. They had them carefully laid out, though one point caused them a temporary heartsinking. How were they to get her to wear the watch?

John could not well give it to her; that would be too open, and the boys—oh, no, not that! At length they hit upon an idea.

Miss Vail was interested in botany, and Mr. Reade arranged to take her one afternoon to see some curious plants which he had discovered. An hour before the appointed time he and James stole out of the house carrying the watch. They went for some distance along the path in the wood, and then, setting the hand of the watch half-an-hour ahead, they placed it on the ground where anyone who passed would see it. Then they stepped back and regarded it from different points to make sure that it was sufficiently comprehensive.

"Now," said James, "you go back for Miss Vail, and I will stay for awhile in case anyone should come along first."

And John went away in a state of tremendous excitement.

Miss Vail thought she had never known Mr. Reade to be so absent-minded. She tried to get his opinion upon certain fossil remains that had just been unearthed, but found him unresponsive. His mind was apparently concentrated upon botany.

"It is very important that we keep our eyes on the ground, Miss Vail, or we may overlook the plants," he said almost abruptly, while she was asking him to explain the difference between the various kinds of oaks. He was sorry to interrupt her, but he really could not have her staring up into the trees at this particular point in the road.

Miss Vail dutifully turned her eyes earthward. Presently she gave an exclamation of surprise as she came upon the watch, lying face up and ticking cheerfully. She picked it up and examined it closely.

"What a pity that someone should have lost such a beautiful watch!" she said. "There are no initials on it, either."

"'Finding is keeping,' then," quoted Mr. Reade.

"Oh, I shall advertise, of course," was the prompt reply, which did not disturb Mr. Reade, for he knew there would be no answer.

"It doesn't seem to keep very good time," he said, comparing it with his own. "You should let me regulate it for you."

"Indeed, I should be very glad if you would; and if we don't find the owner, I think I shall give it to Kitty—she hasn't one."

Mr. Reade stopped short. To have his plans upset in this simple manner dismayed him. It was not for Kitty he had had the match made, and her nervous temperament did not interest him. Miss Vail looked at him inquiringly.

"Surely," he stammered, "you do not intend to entrust so valuable a watch to her? She's too young; she would break it. Really, I should consider it most unwise."

"Well," said Miss Vail, laughing at his earnestness, "perhaps you are right. I will keep this and give her my old one."

Mr. Reade breathed again.

"A very sensible arrangement," he said.

His satisfaction increased as Miss Vail fixed the watch in the front of her dress. They continued their walk, and saw the rare plants. Mr. Reade became most lively and entertaining.

That evening John and James held a congratulatory meeting in the study. Their scheme was under way, at all events; the next thing was to reap the results.

John now began to be more specific in his attentions to Miss Vail.

"Elation," said he, "should cause the watch to gain time. If a lady finds herself the recipient of compliments from a gentleman of whom she is fond, it would be natural that she should be elated, would it not, James?"

James thought that it would.

"Therefore," John continued, "I spent this afternoon trying to gently insinuate my regards. If she is pleased it ought to be shown by the watch to-morrow."

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It was with some trepidation that he took the watch on the following day, under pretext of regulating it. He studied it anxiously; it had gained three minutes.

Mr. Reade made a rapid mental calculation, and thought: "That is something, but it is not sufficient gain to warrant me in feeling particularly encouraged. I must wait."

He told James, who at once expressed the opinion that some more decisive step should be taken.

"Suppose you were to send her up some chocolate or some flowers," he suggested.

John rather recoiled, on account of his present fear of his nephews.

"The boys would think it so unusual for me to give anyone flowers," he objected. "If there were any reason for it—if there were something very rare, that anybody might be interested in, for instance—" a pause.

"We have not tried the effect of depression yet," James said.

"That will be much more complicated, I fear, James."

"Not at all. Suppose I undertake to talk with Miss Vail, and tell her that I believe you are exceedingly attracted by her sister. If she is fond of you, that should make her feel uneasy, and the watch would lose."

Personal feelings overcame scientific considerations, and Mr. Reade answered promptly:

"But I don't want her to feel uneasy!"

"Then there is nothing to do but to try elation once more. If you wish, I will try to make her see that your affections are directed towards her, and you can call in the evening and see the result."

"I wish you would propose for me at the same time," sighed Mr. Reade.

But on this point he met with a decided refusal. James said there were some things that a man must attend to himself. The rest of the mission he undertook, and started upon it early the next day.

He was gone most of the morning, but he was unable to give John much information when he got back.

"I flatter myself that I did it very delicately," he acknowledged, "but it is extremely difficult to tell what Miss Vail thinks. Of course, I did not say that you were in love with her, but I hinted it. She laughed and rather pooh-poohed the idea."

John felt uneasy; he had an impression that he was in for it now. He resolved not to wait for the evening, but to go and see Miss Vail in the afternoon. James applauded the determination, as the watch would have less opportunity of being influenced by other events which might arise in the meantime.

Mr. Reade thought that James's talk might have put new ideas into Miss Vail's head, and that she might in consequence treat him differently, but he was mistaken. She was precisely the same, and he saw that he should have to depend solely upon science. He seized the first opportunity to ask if he should look at the watch. Miss Vail handed it to him with a laugh.

"See," she said, "hasn't it been behaving shockingly? That is——"

But Mr. Reade was not listening. He was staring at the watch. It was an hour and three-quarters ahead of time!

Surely no one need desire more encouragement than that! She must have been very much overjoyed at what James had said for such an effect as this to have been produced. In view of such convincing proofs of her affection he would hesitate no longer.

"Then you *do* love me, Miss Margaret?" he exclaimed. "Will you marry me?"

It was much simpler to accomplish than he had expected. It is true Miss Vail was somewhat startled, but she recovered her composure with commendable promptitude and assented, with a decided twinkle in her eyes:

"Yes, I will, and I do, but however did you find it out?"

He did not tell her just that minute, but later he repeated the history of the watch to her, full of pride and pleasure in the success of his scientific courtship. He did not understand why the twinkle in Miss Vail's eyes increased until there was too much twinkle to be confined there, and it extended to her mouth as well, and made dimples that were out of all keeping with so learned a subject. When he had finished, she said:

"What a dear, stupid goose you are! I have been positively flinging myself at your head for the last month."

And then, with another burst of merriment which Mr. Reade found infectious even before he knew the cause:

"As for the watch, I only put it on when I saw you come in the gate. Kitty has been wearing it all the morning!"

That evening John and James held another congratulatory meeting in the study. The result of the wooing was so happy that neither was disposed to grumble because it was not accomplished exactly as they had expected it to be.

"There is only one thing that troubles me," said John.

"Yes?" said James questioningly.

"It is that when Margaret becomes my wife, I shall naturally have more demands upon my time."

"Of course, John."

"And I am afraid you will be left to yourself a good deal."

Mr. Reade looked seriously at his brother; there was something strange about James's expression. John could not make it out.

Then James spoke.

"John," he said mildly, "this morning, and again this afternoon while you were talking to Miss Vail, I was arranging things with Kitty, and we are going to be married at the same time that you are."

H. T. P.

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Eva—The hair of Italian women grows longer than that of any other nationality. On an average, English women have the shortest hair.

Insomnia.—You say that the old remedy of courting sleep has proved ineffectual. It may surprise you to hear, however, that sleep may be obtained by trying to keep the eyes open and fixed on some particular object, real or imaginary. This effort relieves the mind from thoughts that perplex it, and diverts the attention from oneself, and before you are aware of it the struggle will have ended, and sleep will be victorious.

Smoker asks: "Where did tobacco originally come from?"————It would be difficult to say, for the plant has never been found growing wild in any part of the world. It is believed, however, to be a native of tropical America.

Tramp wants to know if it is true that dummy windows in old houses are a sign that a murder has been committed in the room to which they belong.————Certainly not, although they are ugly enough to suggest almost anything. They are, however, only relics of the days when windows were taxed. A dummy window, of course, was not taxed, and was put in for the sake of preserving the symmetrical appearance of the house from the outside.

Young Bachelor was much alarmed the other day by a statement he saw in a certain paper to the effect that single men do not live so long as married men, and he nervously asks if this is true.————Without wishing to further alarm you, I am bound to say that, according to statistics, it is a fact. Seven married men in every thousand die between the ages of thirty and forty, but the rate of single men is twelve per thousand.

S. P.—A very simple and effective means to stop snoring is to touch the throat of the sleeper, pressing it very slightly.

M. H. S. puts the following question: "What is the reason that on going into a dark room suddenly from the daylight, one cannot for a few moments distinguish objects that eventually become quite clear?"————The reason is that while in the strong light of day the pupil of the eye has become contracted, and it cannot at once enlarge to admit sufficient rays of light to enable the individual to see clearly.

D. G. H.—It is the Queen that dissolves Parliament, not the Prime Minister, and her method of doing so is by proclamation. In the proclamation the date of the assembling of the new Parliament is also fixed. Of course, Her Majesty acts under the advice of her Ministers.

B. L. N. asks: "Has a dromedary two humps or one, or is a one-humped dromedary a camel?"————An African dromedary is a light, slimly-built camel with one hump; it is the Bactrian camel, from Asia Minor, that has two humps. The latter animal is becoming very scarce indeed.

Pigmy asks: "Which is the tallest race of people?"————The North American Indian stands higher than any other race of the world, but the Patagonian runs him very close; then come the inhabitants of Norway, Great Britain, British America, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark and Holland.

Scotty is anxious to know the origin of "Auld Lang Syne."————It is of uncertain origin, for there being several versions of it. One of the best is by Burns, but only the second and third stanzas are by this poet, the remainder being from the pen of Ramsay. One version is dated 1716; another is said to be dated from the sixteenth century.

F. A. C. seeks the explanation of the reason intoxicated people frequently see double.————Because the nerve centres are changed by the action of alcoholic poison. There is a want of harmony in the action of the muscles which move the eyeballs, and, consequently, instead of both eyes being focussed simultaneously on one object, one eye receives an impression independently of the other. The two impressions are communicated to the brain, and the object is therefore seen twice.

R. S.—There cannot possibly be 366 days in any year except in a leap year. It is possible, however by sailing eastwards round the world to split up the year into 366 periods, each consisting of a night and a day. On the other hand by sailing westwards the number of such periods becomes reduced to 364.

T. S.—The halfpenny stamp did not put in an appearance until thirty years after the penny one.

O. P.—Curiously enough, O. P. also has a question to put with regard to the human stature. He asks: "How is it that blonde nations are generally taller than their darker neighbours?"————It is due to the geological position of the blonde races. They are characteristic of the north, and on account of the lower degree of temperature are induced to take more exercise, which throws them more in the open air, and thereby increases the rate of their growth.

T. B. wants to know if, on meeting a lady of his aquaintance in the street, he should remove his glove before shaking hands with her.————No, it is not considered necessary nowadays. The older fashion—which many still consider the better of the two—was to remove the right-hand-glove when possible, or to apologise if unable to do so. The custom originated in the Middle Ages, when the knight's gauntlet would be apt to injure a lady's hand.

J. J. writes to say that a few weeks back he noticed we informed a correspondent, through these columns, of the amount of gold contained by the oceans of the world so far as it is possible to gauge it. He would like to know if the sea contains silver also, and, if so, what quantity.————Scientists declare that the water in the whole ocean contains in solution more than 2,000,000 tons of pure silver, not to speak of the untold wealth it must have reaped from wrecked vessels.

W. F. C.—Such a thing as a cigar was quite unknown until the beginning of the present century, so that the one which you say you have in your possession cannot be so old as you imagine.

T. D.—The disease you refer to is probably that which prevails in Senegal and along the western interior of Africa, the symptom of which is a gradually increasing torpor, until the victim can no longer keep awake, and falls into a deep slumber from which nothing can arouse him. In this case he remains, perhaps, for a long time, until death overtakes him.

Bachelor writes to ask whether I am of an opinion that plain girls make better wives than their more good-looking sisters.————Such an idea is absurd, to say the least of it. This is one of those matters upon which it is impossible to generalise. It does not follow that because a woman is beautiful she must of necessity be vain and frivolous and fonder of pleasure than attending to her domestic affairs. Good and bad wives are to be found among both classes, and no hard and fast lines can be drawn.

POSTAL RATES.

Short Stories will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

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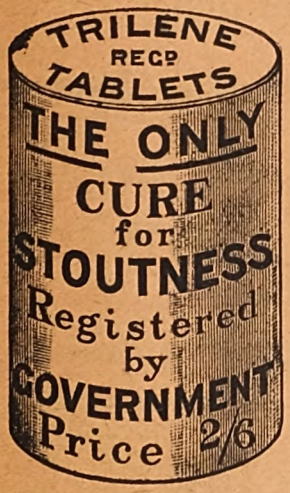
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

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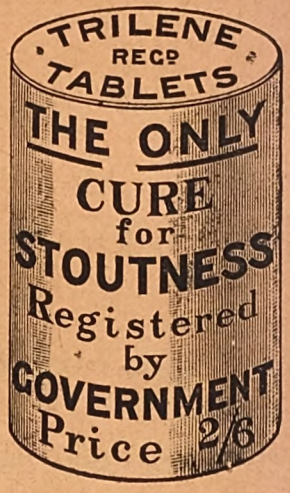
Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.
"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. Canham."

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

Surgeon-Colonel E. S. Brander, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

Lady Conrad writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. Boston, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. Love, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
Miss S. J. Pritchard says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
Miss M. Flavell says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
Mr. J. Thomas writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
Mr. Wm. Usher says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Mrs. Hutchinson, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. Billings, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

Miss Wells, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

Miss Duggleby, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

Miss C. E. Singleton, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

Miss Macpherson, Balnagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

Mrs. Edmonds, Pontyguesta, Pontychin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

Marian Taylor, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

Miss Gillespie, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. Nicholson, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

Countess G. Fürstenberg, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

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BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER. "Stories of the Stock Exchange." By Robert Machray. How John Hardy Was Tortured. (See "The Empress of the Earth.")

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 484. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 9TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

"FROMMS"

"A COMPLETE FOOD" LANCET

FROMMS EXTRACT OF PURELY VEGETABLE ORIGIN

PHYSICIANS AND SCIENTISTS REPORT THAT

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HALF THE PRICE OF MEAT EXTRACTS.

SOLD BY CHEMISTS AND GROCERS

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These marvellous Costumes are acknowledged throughout the world to be far SUPERIOR IN VALUE, STYLE, AND FINISH to any Costumes ever yet offered to the public at anything approaching the same prices.

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ALLEN FOSTER & CO. are offering a special line of extraordinary value. This charming Costume is made in the **Specialite Serge**, tailor made, and well-finished. Full size skirt.

PRICE ONLY **10/6**

SKIRT ONLY **5/6**

or in the new **Venetian Cloth**, only **13/6**

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Any lot sent post free in *United Kingdom* on receipt of P.O. The quality of these certainly genuine goods at such low prices will astonish you. Send at once. Enormous demand. Orders executed in rotation.

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whether you prefer a LADIES' or GENTS' Silk Handkerchief. Also enclose stamped addressed *envelope* for results, which will be posted to all immediately this Special Sale terminates. As a guarantee of good faith, the proprietors have deposited the sealed solutions with Mr. F. OLDACRES, 52 Chancery Lane, W.C., which will be opened at his office.

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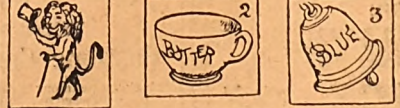
SEND NO MONEY.

In order to introduce my name into every household in the Kingdom, I undertake and guarantee to give away one of my **"World-Famed £2 Silver Watches,"** list price, Ladies' or Gentlemen's, to every reader who sends me the correct reading of the Rebus printed below. I am preparing to send out immediately 2,000 of these watches. This is a perfectly genuine competition, and the only thing you have to do is carry out the conditions, and if you succeed in guessing correctly you have the advantage of our truly wonderful offer.

These pictures represent three well-known English Wild Flowers. The conditions of the Competition are that you find out what these flowers are, and if you are correct you undertake to purchase one of my inexpensive Solid Silver Chains. These chains are the best made, are marvellous value. Money returned if dissatisfied. Send at once, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope, so that I may inform you if correct.



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EASTER BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER.

No. 484.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 9th, 1898.

Out of the Snare.

THE summer's end was near, and a cold wind blowing off the sea made the men turn up their coat collars. A few more such evenings and the place would be dead. Even now it was an easy thing to secure a good table in the inclosure.

A hunchback, handsomely dressed, and with the air of a man of the world, sauntered along through the rows of chairs in search of a place out of the draught. His light coat caught in passing, and, without looking back he gave a little pull to loosen it, and there followed a faint exclamation of a girl's voice. He turned and raised his hat.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!"

The girl's face was very lovely, and he heard a few words of pity murmured half to herself, half to her companion:

"Poor fellow, isn't it a shame!"

The hunchback, finding the next table somewhat sheltered, sat down where he could watch her face. Being a philosopher he did not hate those who pitied him.

The girl was well worth looking at. She was cheaply dressed, with the abject insistence of prevailing fashion that characterises the woman ignorant of her good qualities, and there was the suggestion of the counter about her, but her figure was so supple, her face so youthfully sweet and delicately tinted, that a man looking at her must either have pitied her or have longed for her. The hunchback pitied her. Her companion, who was a tall, handsome man with bold blue eyes and an immobile face, evidently did the other thing.

The girl was restless, ill at ease, and seemed unaccustomed to her surroundings. She fidgeted with her gloves, pulling them off and on, and glanced timidly at

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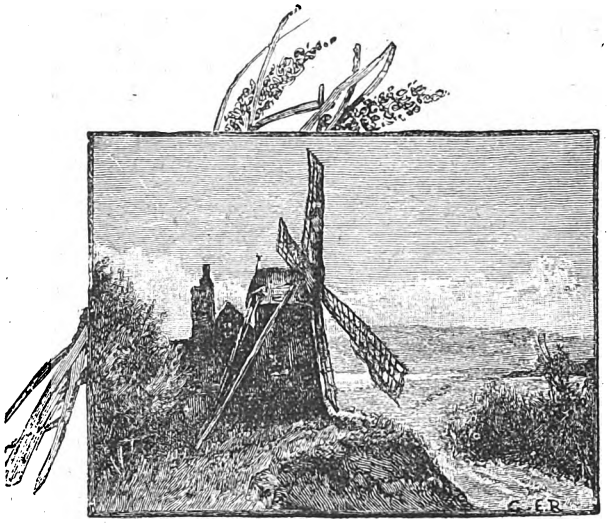

her escort, only to drop her eyes when she met his gaze.

"My dear child—what did you say your name was? oh, yes, Florrie—don't you like your champagne? Isn't it sweet enough? Or shall I get you something else?"

"Oh, no, thank you," said Florrie nervously. "It's very nice." She lifted her glass to her lips and took a short sip.

The man laughed.

"It's not what you thought it would be, is it?" he said. "There's a lot of romance about champagne, after all. You'd better try a Vermouth."

"No, thank you," said Florrie. "This is lovely." And she put out her hand to stop him as he motioned to a waiter. He caught the hand in his for an instant, then leant forward his elbow on the table, and began to talk to her in low tones.

The hunchback watching her face from his more secluded seat, saw her cheeks flush, her eyes fill and droop; yet her expression was hardly that of blissful anticipation.

"Poor little thing," said the hunchback to himself.

Suddenly the girl's companion sprang up.

"Excuse me one moment, won't you?" he said hastily. "There's a man over there that—I'll be back directly."

He called a waiter and ordered some wine for the girl. "Au revoir, little one," he added, and he made his way across the space in front of the bandstand, his handsome figure pushing on without apology. Reaching a table opposite, he seemed to be exchanging greetings with a party of four or five men, and to be resisting invitations to be seated. At last, with a shrug and a backward glance, he sat down, turning his back upon the table he had left.

Florrie sat still as he had left her, looking more nervous than ever. Her wine stood untasted, and she kept her eyes cast down, while waves of colour came and went upon her soft cheeks.. The hunchback rose at length, and sat down at her table.

"I hope I didn't hurt you when I brushed by you a few moments ago," he said gently.

"Oh, no, sir," said Florrie timidly, with a frightened glance across the garden at the broad back of her companion. She gathered her little belongings together, and half rose as if to flee to him, but the hunchback stopped her.

"Don't mind me," he said kindly; "I only came because this is hardly the place for you to sit alone. Your—friend should not have left you."

"Oh, he'll be back soon," she said, and sat down reassured.

"Is this your first visit here?" he asked, after a pause.

"It—no, not exactly," she answered with a quick flush. "I've been here once before with a gentleman and a lady, Miss Lehman, and a friend of hers."

"And who is Miss Lehman?"

"She's a girl who's in the same house of business as I am, and is down here for a holiday,—like me," explained the girl, waxing communicative under the influence of a sympathetic listener.

"She's an awf'ly nice girl, and a perfect lady. Older than I am, she is too."

"And do you like this place?" said the hunchback, in a low tone. He was beginning to long to do something for this girl, to warn her, to hold her back—and at any moment that man might return—and he did not know how to begin. He longed to be able to tell her of her peril, but how could he do it? He was so interested in the girl's situation that he hardly heard her answer.

"No—I mean—not so very; it isn't so much fun as I thought it was."

"That is a pity," said the hunchback And you look tired," he continued in a low tone. "Wouldn't you like to go home?"

The girl started and blushed again, but did not reply. Her eyes sought for an instant a table on the other side of the garden. His back was still turned, and they were laughing. His shoulders shook as he sat leaning forward, his arm on the table. Florrie's eyes, returning, met those of the hunchback with a look that was an inquiry and almost an appeal.

"Oh, I'll make it all right," he said cheerfully; "I'll explain it to—what is his name?"

"Mr. Jones," murmured Florrie, "but I don't quite like to——"

"Have you known him long," persisted the hunchback.

She turned white, then crimson, and hung her head.

"Oh, I know it's awful of me," she stammered. "He spoke to me on my way to my lodgings and we had dinner, and he said I'd like to come up here for a little while, so I did—and—and"—the tears began to chase each other down her pretty cheeks—"he's been awf'ly kind, only—I wouldn't ever have done it, only it's so dull at the lodgings, and Miss Lehman's out most of the time, and I don't know anybody else to speak to—at home it's dreadful to have to be alone all the evening, and—and—oh, I don't know *what* to do!"

She began to sob drearily and silently. The hunchback laid his hand lightly upon hers.

"I'll tell you what to do," he said softly, his eyes on the table across the garden, where a breaking-up seemed to be in progress. "Let me take you out of this." His breath came quick and his disengaged hand beat his cane nervously against the table.

"Never mind Mr. Jones," he continued eagerly, "he isn't worth it. He'd no business to bring you here and no right to leave you alone. Do come," he urged; "I'll explain to him."

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He rose with decision, and the frightened girl mechanically followed his example. He gathered up her possessions, and led her away, keeping as much in the shadow as possible.

Reaching the entrance, he looked back, his heart in his mouth. He saw the tall man making his way to the table he had left. "Maybe I'd better go back," whispered Florrie; "he may be angry, and he acted like a perfect gentleman."

"No, no," murmured the hunchback, "for goodness' sake—trust me." He hardly knew what he was saying, for a tall man with bold blue eyes was hurrying towards the entrance. He hurried Florrie along, and they pushed their way into the middle of a small crowd. They got away without being seen by Mr. Jones. The hunchback breathed more freely. He was able to make a poor jest on the outwitted escort of little Florrie. The girl did not respond. She was nervous, not certain of herself, perhaps even a little disappointed.

The girl's little hand lay upon the hunchback's arm; her pretty head was but little higher than his own. He had shunned the women of his own class, and this girl, winsome and temporarily dependent on him, was strange and pleasing. He did not speak, the silence was so pleasant. At last he was startled by the sound of sobbing beside him.

"Why, you poor child!" he cried, "what is the matter?"

He would have stopped, but she hurried him on.

"Oh! how good you are!" she cried; "I understand now—let us hurry! I'm so frightened!—Oh, I ought to thank you and I can't—I'll never forget—never—Oh, oh!"

She stopped, clutching his arm, her lips quivering, her tear-filled eyes gleaming in the bright light of a lamp. For the moment she was transfigured; there was a look of the woman's soul on her face brought there by the knowledge of her danger.

The hunchback fastened his eyes upon her, and drew a deep breath. His heart beat till he thought she must hear it. He looked at her cheap dress, her delicate face, from which the higher look was vanishing already; his head swam. Then he took the hand lying upon his arm and raised it to his lips.

"That is right," he said gently, "never forget—never!"

A fly was standing close to them and the hunchback led her to it. "Get in," he said. "Where shall I tell him? No, you shall tell him yourself; that will be better. Wait a moment, I had something to say to you'—what was it? Oh, I can't remember——"

"I want to thank you," panted the girl.

"No, dear, no. Good-night, good-night." He drew a half-crown from his pocket and thrust it into the hand of the driver.

"When she gives you the address, drive as fast as you can. Do you hear?"

And he pushed his hands into his pockets, and walked away as rapidly as he could.

A few yards further on he paused to listen to the lessening roll of the wheels. When he was out of hearing—"What an idiot I am!" he murmured. "I think the occasion demands that I get extremely intoxicated."

And he went back to the parade. It had grown very cold, and the lights glared, and the orchestra played out of tune. A withered leaf fluttered from one of the flower boxes and fell into the hunchback's tumbler. He fished it out and swore a little. There was no doubt that the end of the summer had come.

Wallace Wallis.

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Unearthed and Re-Edited by Robert Machray.

The Narrative of Colonel John Ambler, formerly of Sabine's Brigade.

There hath been so much said, and so much more wickedly imagined against him whom I was long proud to call my master, to wit, John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, that it hath entered into my mind to make public that which is within my own knowledge of the famous diamonds of the Duchess.

Not that the Duchess's diamonds were ever made the subject of unseemly debate, save once, when the "dubious means" by which they came into the possession of her Grace were not obscurely hinted at by a certain rascally pamphleteer of Harley's party.

But I have considered this:—

Here is one affair of which now I alone know the fact; and in it I can see naught with which the Duke, my Lord, could be charged.

So, were the truth set out in each case that hath been brought forward against him, I cannot conceive but that the genius and the many high qualities of him whom even his enemies called the greatest man of his age—and of such an age—would shine forth.

For in the instance which I here relate, it will appear that his Grace did great service to Her Majesty in obtaining money by means of which he procured "timely and good advices"—to copy the words his Grace himself used, when he refuted the slanderous statements which had been founded upon the words of Sir Solomon Medina, of whom more anon—of the movements of the French in the Low Countries.

He also outwitted a knave, as I esteem him, and at the same time gave an especial degree of pleasure to his lady, whose true lover he was so long as he lived.

As all the world knoweth, his Grace was born in Devonshire, and there, I too; so that when I entered upon my career in the Army I was commended to his favour by this circumstance. Thus it was that on several occasions I was sent by him on secret and even perilous adventures, the conduct of which, a fair and successful issue having come about, was not displeasing to him.

Often would his Grace lament in my hearing, for he ever treated me as a friend, and one in whom he might trust, which, God wot, was true, how he was hampered in the field by the cavils of the Dutch Deputies, and more also in general by the want of money which he might use as he deemed to be of advantage for private intelligence and secret service, without having to render account to the Parliament in London.

For none knew better than he that there were times when secret moneys often might be employed to good purpose both in spying upon the enemy in his camps, and also in defeating and bringing to nought the plans of the French King, who was ever meditating this treachery or that.

During the war it hath been a common practice with the generals of the Army to procure moneys by various devices for their private purposes. Now, it hath been by obtaining such and such a sum from the persons who contracted for the supply of bread and provisions for the soldiers, or even of fodder for the horses; and, again, by the deduction of a per-centum from the pay given by the Emperor or other of the Allies.

There accompanied his Grace in most or perhaps all of his campaigns, one whom no man liked and many hated. This was Sir Solomon Medina, a Hebrew of vast wealth, whose business it was to provide bread and bread waggons for the army. Often was the food scant and poor, and the soldiers put the blame of this on Medina. But it was a matter of rumour that the rich Jew was so much in the confidence of the Duke of Marlborough—it was even said, what was a shameful thing to say, that the

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Duke was so much in the pay of Sir Solomon—that Medina was able to send intelligence of the result of his Grace's victories to London, and that by a day or two before his Grace's couriers arrived with his dispatches for the Queen.

Being but a plain man of the West country, and a soldier to boot—the hand that acts, and not the mind that guides—I marvelled greatly wherein lay an advantage to Medina in the use of this knowledge so quickly communicated, as was said, to his friends in England. I was now destined to perceive the why and the wherefore.

It was past the middle of the year 1708, and the Army of the Netherlands, which had been greatly heartened by the arrival of the Prince Eugene, knew that it was the Duke's mind to force a great battle, and so put an end to the war. Vendôme, a skilful general and a yet more skilful plotter, had procured the surrender of Ghent and Bruges by treachery, and the French now threatened the fortress of Oudenarde—a name not to be forgotten while men live upon the earth.

The great victory of Oudenarde was won by the Duke and the Prince Eugene—my master ever placed the Prince's name before his own, but herein I take leave to depart from his Grace—on the 11th of July. On the night of the 9th, the Duke sent for me to go to his tent, where presently I found him with Mr. Cardonnel, his Grace's secretary, but in so great a fever that he told me they had been trying to persuade him to go to Brussels, a project which he by no means entertained, as he was resolved to fight the French as soon as an opportunity served.

His Grace also said that he was greatly vexed by letters he had received from England, where the envy and malice of his opponents were ever quick to work him ill. Then he declared he was heartily weary of the war, and longed for nothing so much as to be at home with the Duchess and their children. Next he desired me in especial to keep near him, as he was minded to send me to England with news of the first great battle we might be engaged in, and so desired me to have all things in readiness for the journey.

The next day his Grace was better, and with a rapidity of movement which was truly wonderful, but which was characteristic of the Duke's generalship when he so ordered it, the army marched from Asche with but a brief halt or two all that day, most of the night, and all the following morning, until the Scheldt was crossed and the two armies met, coming to blows first of all on the high ground above Oudenarde.

It was past four o'clock in the afternoon before the battle was general. What followed was marked by a confusion and disorder which showed how little the French generals, and especially the Duke of Burgundy, could make up their minds what to do in the presence of so a great a captain as my master. According to his Grace's direction I kept as near him as I could, and it was not difficult to see that he was satisfied with what was going forward.

It was about nine in the evening, and the daylight was nearly fled. Once more the star of my Lord, the Duke, was in the ascendant, and another great victory of the English upon the French had fallen to be chronicled. The Duke called me to him, and never did I see him, always a man of noble and graceful appearance—whether soldier most or courtier most I cannot tell—more tranquil or composed.

And yet his first words showed perhaps why his mien was not marked by a greater feeling of exultation.

"Oh, for two more hours of daylight," he said, "and we should have made an end of this war!"

Then he protested in a manner most solemn that he preferred before any personal concern the good of his Queen and his country, and that nothing would make the Queen's business go so well if but the battle had been utterly decisive. Next he spoke of the knavish politics and designs of certain people who were near the Queen's person and were no friends of his, and how they kept him from the procurement of moneys which were needed for carrying on the war, which he now predicted might even yet continue for some time. "But," said he, "I see a way."

As for me, I was in a great amazement that any man on the instant of his having won so great a victory, a new glory to the arms of England, should, as it

"You can tell her ladyship that she may have the diamonds."

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were, take such calm and steady view of aught but the battle itself.

He gave me charge to get me to London as speedily as I might, giving me at the same time a letter for the Duchess, and the strange command to be to her an eye that should see, and an ear that should hear, and a tongue that should speak in no wise but as her Grace herself should bid me.

Above all, and this, it appeared, was the essence of the thing, I was straightly charged to be in London as soon as, or, if fortune might help so far, before the messengers of Medina. And if the chances of the way or of the wave were to prove themselves hostile to the adventure, it was to be my duty to strive to delay these riders of Medina. Then he gave me his hand and a private message for the ear of the Duchess only —the carriage of which to her Grace was a great honour to place upon me.

"You can tell her Ladyship," said he with a smile, as I was taking my leave, "that she may have the diamonds"—a speech the meaning of which I knew not at the time.

Men have said many harsh things against his Grace, but no man yet hath had the hardihood to make suggestion that the great Duke was not of all great men the most singular in this, that he was ever constant and faithful to his wife, the Duchess Sarah.

It so happened that the nearest road to Ostende, which was by way of Ghent, was in the hands of the enemy, and so I had to make my way in the night to Courtray, which lies to the south of Oudenarde, and then on to the highway, from which the port of Ostende is about eight leagues distant.

I told them a tale about myself.

I was mounted on my own beautiful horse, the equal of which for fidelity and swiftness I know not, and the ride was one that was within his powers; but there were many stragglers from the beaten army of Vendôme who would have liked nothing so much as cutting me off.

Being favoured by fortune, my journey proceeded without check or misadventure, and as the day broke I rode through a village, which I remembered in former years, of the name of Tourout, and I knew then that Ostende would be reached by me in safety, for it was but a few miles further on.

And here in the port I saw several vessels, and amongst them the *White Swan*, which I knew to belong to Sir Solomon Medina. And so I judged, the ship being all in readiness to set sail, that the messengers of the bread contractor had not yet arrived, but were expected. Then I went to an inn, where I was not unknown, and broke my fast, and inquired of mine host as to what time there would be a ship sailing for the Thames or some port as near London as could be reached at once. But I could hear of none, nor could I procure any.

While I was thus making no progress in the effort, two men entered the inn. It was easy to perceive that they were not soldiers, but, assuming an air of great importance, they called aside the keeper of the inn, and, after a time, they were good enough to devote to me a portion of their regard.

Then mine host approached me, and declared who they were: that they were about to sail for London in the *White Swan*, and that he had done his devoir to get passage for me along with them, and that they were not inclined to take me. However, he recommended me to speak to them myself.

Dropping his voice to a whisper, he thereupon asked me if I had heard the news of the Duke's defeat. I could scarce refrain from smiling, but I commanded myself, and asked him what he knew; to which he replied that the men whom I had seen talking to him had brought report that his Grace had been routed with great slaughter whilst he was crossing the Dender two days before.

I could not but make the observation to myself that these men must know—knowing the Duke's position so positively on the 10th—the exact time when the Duke had reached Lessines, and so had secured the passage of the Dender, and that it was most probable that they were also acquainted with what had followed, and so that it was most likely that they had come from Oudenarde itself. That they were Medina's men I hazarded a shrewd guess; for why else should they be sailing in the *White Swan*; but why was it, I could not but ask myself, that they were bruiting about a disaster to the Duke which was pure fiction.

So I kept my own counsel, and made bold to ask the two men further particulars of the battle. To which they, nothing loath, made response in an

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invention, complicated with many details, of how at last the most wonderful general of the time had been totally overthrown.

Calling for wine for their entertainment, I told them a tale about myself in return for their lies about the Duke of Marlborough.

I said I had been summoned to England to see my mother, who was on the point of death, but that I had encountered much difficulty in getting passage thither, and that I would be their servant to the extent of several broad pieces if they would take me with them on board the *White Swan*. But the senior of the two men, who seemed to be a person of authority, maintained that it was not possible, as their instructions forbade their doing anything of the sort.

However, I was resolved that go with them I should, and so, when they walked down to the ship from the inn, I went along with them, laughing and speaking to them as if I had given up all thought of going in their vessel, and, as I had nothing with me but my sword, they had no suspicions of me. Presently the ship was cast off, and as they were waving their adieux to me and I to them, it appeared no doubt to them that I stepped too far forward by mischance, and so fell into the water.

One of the crew threw me a rope which, being a fair swimmer, albeit very tired from my long ride, I was in no great hurry to take hold of. I made several feints, notwithstanding, to do so, until at last, perceiving how we were some distance from the shore, and fearing that after all they might not be too much inclined to have me on board the ship—which indeed I afterwards found to be the case—and so let me drown, I permitted myself to be drawn to the ship's side, and thence on to the deck, but in a very exhausted and almost dying condition. Indeed, I was so far spent that I swooned away.

When I came to myself, the master of the *White Swan* told me that there had been a great discussion and even some fierce words between the two men of Medina, but as the hours passed on without my making recovery, they at length agreed to leave me alone. Next morning we were in England, and having promised to pay them a hundred pieces when we arrived in London, we journeyed thither together, which was a great thing for me, as they had horses waiting for them. As they evinced some anxiety to finger my money, and in some sort, indeed, regarded me as their prisoner, held, as it were, for ransom, they procured horses for me also along the way.

Travelling with great diligence, we made London that night, and I had the happiness to deliver my Lord's letter to her Grace, and the private message with which he had charged me. The Duchess read over my Lord's letter once and then again, and then a third time. Dismissing me with many gracious words, after having asked how I had fared on the way, and particularly of the two men with whom I had travelled, she commanded me to wait upon her the following morning.

I had the happiness to deliver my Lord's letter to her Grace.

I had all but forgotten to give her Grace that last word of my master about the diamonds, but it came into mind in time, and I told her Grace of it. Whereupon she appeared highly delighted.

That night I slept as soundly as any other wearied wayfarer might do, yet in the morning I was up betimes, and I at once perceived, from the downcast looks of those I chanced to meet, that there was something evil or terrible in the air. Inquiring what the matter might be, I was near thrown into an ague on being told that the heavy news had come to the town that the Duke of Marlborough, hitherto the invincible captain of the age, had suffered a sore defeat at the hands of Vendôme and the Duke of Burgundy.

My mind is not of that sort which thinks or reasons quickly, but to connect this most infernal report with the two men of Medina, along with whom I had journeyed, would have been not difficult even for a child. Yet being but simple and unskilled in the meaning of so cruel an artifice, I did wonder.

Yea, for one brief space, the thought did come: "Could there be even a shred of truth in the story?" However, I dismissed this absurd notion the moment it came.

When I waited upon her Grace, I thought it within my duty to mention what was now the talk of the town; to which the Duchess replied, as one who was well pleased, and in possession of some key to the riddle I could not read—that the thing suited marvellously well.

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Remembering the Duke's strange command of silence which he laid upon me, I had held my peace, saying never a word, good or bad, as to what I knew of the bloody battle of Oudenarde and the destruction of the French. And now, here was my Lady, who *knew* that there indeed had been a great victory, appearing well disposed to hear that the tidings of my Lord's overthrow should be shaking the hearts of all men in London.

"You shall know," she said with a sprightly movement, "this evening or to-morrow."

"The Queen?" I made bold to say.

Then her Grace said that she would take me to see the Queen that night, but that she had other business which she desired me to transact for her, and which would occupy me all that day. She gave me two letters, one having the address on it of Sir Francis Child, at "The Marygold," in Fleet Street, and the other that of Sir Charles Duncombe, at "The Grasshopper," in Lumbard Street, both of whom were goldsmiths and bankers of great reputation.

Her Grace likewise said, although I have since thought that she did intend to throw dust into my eyes, only the event turned out so pat, that Sir Charles Duncombe had for sale some diamond pendants with three brilliant drops to each, which she greatly admired, and which his Grace had promised to give her on his winning his first great battle of the campaign of that year. She added that if the matter should prove according to her expectations, I might have the pleasure of bringing them to her on my return from Lumbard Street in the afternoon.

We greeted each other.

So I hied me toward the City, and presently in Fleet Street came upon the sign of the Childs, "The Marygold," carved in oak, its ground painted green with a gilt border, and above it the rising sun; underneath was the motto of Sir Francis, "*Ainsi mon âme.*" Having delivered the letter of her Grace, I was desired by Sir Francis himself to go with his partner to Lumbard Street to meet Sir Charles Duncombe, whither we accordingly went.

Here there is a great hive of busy goldsmiths and exchangers dealing in the national funds and stocks after methods which were invented in the time of the late King William, and there be many of these very rich merchants, each with his own device above his door, such as "The Black Horse," "The Grapes," "The Goat," "The Flower de Luce," "The Black Boy," and so forth.

But it was in Change Alley, at the Royal Exchange, which one hath called "a narrow sound, but deep as Hell, Change Alley, dreadful name!" that we met with Sir Charles Duncombe, who looked ill at ease and much depressed, as he said, over the news of the defeat of the Duke of Marlborough. On taking him aside and delivering to him the letter of her Grace, I perceived a sudden joyful change to express itself upon his countenance. Yet scarcely had this happiness shone forth from his eyes when it instantly disappeared, being replaced by his former dolorous air and habit of melancholy.

Then the two goldsmiths discussed in my hearing and in that of others who joined themselves to us, what would be the result upon the war of the disaster which had befallen the Duke in the Low Countries. One said this thing, and another that; but all declared with one accord that it was a grievous and heavy matter for the Queen and the country, and then they would shake their heads and sigh.

Yet, notwithstanding all their dejection, I did observe that they ceased not for a moment to carry on their business of buying and selling the Funds, although it certainly seemed to me that there were many people who sold and never bought, and others who bought and did not sell. There was much hubbub and a babble of voices, and, as I stood and gazed upon the Alley, which was now packed with people, and watched their aspect and gesture, and all the excitement and the turmoil of the place, I could not but think that here again I was looking on at what was in some sort a battle, and herein I was right, as I afterwards learnt.

I spent nearly all the day with these merchants, being requested in especial to do so by Sir Charles Duncombe, who said he would probably have an

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important message to send her Grace by me that afternoon. As I walked about, having excused myself to Sir Charles, I chanced to meet, just under the ensign of "The Angel and the Crown," another goldsmith's shop, one of the two men of Sir Solomon in close and earnest conversation with the Hebrew banker.

This was he who acted as the senior of the two, and who first told me of the defeat of the Duke when we had encountered each other in the tavern at Ostende. When he saw me advancing to speak to him, being desirous to ask him to what house I should send the hundred pieces which I had promised for my passage money, he looked at me with great surprise and wonder, and as one not too well pleased with the meeting. However, we greeted each other, and, after a few words about the money I had bargained to give him, he inquired of me if I ever took an adventure in the Funds—a manner of speaking which was as dark as night to me.

To him I replied, and that with some coldness, that I was a soldier and that fighting was my trade; as for money I liked it well enough, but knew no way of getting it save by the sword.

Being in no wise offended at my speech, he made answer that there were other ways of getting it and more certain. "Here," said he, "is a place where gold lies about the streets for them that know the secret of it." As I inquired more of the matter, he explained to me that on such a day as the present, when everyone was heavy and dejected by reason of the news of the Duke's defeat, that people sold out what sums they had in the Funds, and would be content to obtain well nigh any price offered provided it was in gold or silver.

"Then," continued he, "it may fall out that the Duke's defeat may be but a small affair, may be even no defeat at all; the same people who sold to-day thinking the world was about to end, will buy back to-morrow into the Funds, and be content to pay a much higher price than that at which they now sell."

Thanking him for his courtesy I left him, and as it was now nigh about four o'clock in the afternoon, I went on to "The Grasshopper," musing as I proceeded on what sort of strange business this was; and now it flashed upon me like a sudden light what was the plan of the Duke, and why silence had been enjoined upon me.

I now perceived that it had been Medina's purpose to spread abroad the report of the defeat, although he knew all the time that it was a great victory, and so to induce holders of the Funds, being thrown into a panic by the news, to sell out, when, doubtless, he would have his agents and brokers to buy for him. Then, when the tidings of the victory had arrived, and the spirits of men were raised thereat, he would be in readiness to supply back again to them the Funds, and that at his own price.

This had been his practice on other occasions, and my master, the Duke, must have been aware of it, and was now taking advantage of it for his own ends. As I afterwards discovered, Sir Charles Duncombe, with the support of Sir Francis Child, who was banker to my Lord, the Duke, had acted in such a manner that he stood in the place of Medina on behalf of the Duke.

It was easy to be seen that the goldsmiths were well satisfied, and when we three, Sir Charles, one of the Childs, and myself, were all closeted together in a private room, they threw off the cloak of sadness they had constrained themselves to wear, and shouted with glee like boys at school. To-morrow, they told me, the Duke's courier, Lord Stair, was expected to arrive in London, when the whole truth would be known in regard to the glorious field of Oudenarde.

It was now that Sir Charles went out of the room, and presently returning, handed to me a handsome case which he bade me open. In it were the diamonds of which the Duchess had spoken to me in the morning.

Sir Charles told me that the Duchess the winter before had desired my Lord to buy these diamonds for her, but he had put the matter off to a more convenient season, as he was short of money at the time. The Duke, knowing what a great sum he would be likely to obtain through the operation of the goldsmiths, had ordered Sir Charles to send the Duchess the diamonds, if there would be only a good probability of the successful issue of his plans.

They also gave me a letter for the Duchess, along with the case, and I afterwards learnt that the two bankers, who were reputed the richest men in the city, having made a large amount along with the Duke, had together made a present of these diamonds to her Grace.

As for me, I was not altogether satisfied with the part I had played in this affair, albeit a soldier's duty is to obey, until the Duke himself had told me that the money he had obtained by his campaign in Change Alley had been devoted to the secret service and private intelligence of the army, whereby throughout the rest of the summer of 1708 my Lord was able to receive the information which led to the capture of several of the great forts of the enemy.

However, I was better pleased when the Duchess took me with her to see the Queen; and as I had been given leave to say what I knew, I told her Majesty of the great victory her Army had achieved.

It hath been customary to give the messenger bringing such tidings as I announced to the Queen, a reward of £500, but that in this case belonged by right to my Lord Stair, who was the Duke's courier by formal appointment. But the Queen would have it that I should be given the £500, which I begged leave upon my knees to be allowed to refuse; whereupon her Majesty commanded that I should be given her portrait set in precious stones.

Next day there was none in London but knew that Oudenarde had been fought and won; and, next to a victory itself, there is nothing that so stirs the souls of men as the report thereof.

(Next Week: "The First Black Friday.")

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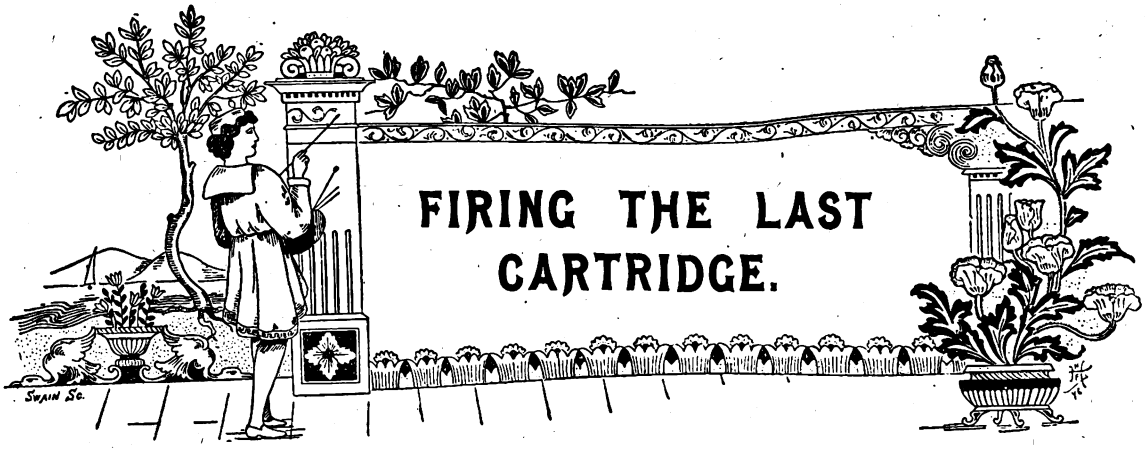

FIRING THE LAST CARTRIDGE.

It was the first of September, 1870. From four o'clock in the morning the formidable noise of the firing and the smoke filled Bazeilles, Balon, and the vicinity. Many times those two villages had been taken and retaken.

About seven o'clock the Germans were repulsed by the celebrated bayonet charge of the Second Regiment of Marine Infantry, and yielded on all sides and gave way. The main street of Bazeilles, the adjacent streets. the gardens, the ditches, were full of human bodies and Bavarian wounded. But the enemy energetically sustained themselves and attacked us with more troops, before which our exhausted and decimated soldiers were obliged to retire.

At this moment I heard the Colonel call Captain Bourgey, of the Thirteenth Company, and order him to occupy the large house facing the street, and commissioned him to defend and keep it, cost what it might. It was the house called "Bourgerie."

I was then an under-officer in the Thirteenth Company, which by the combat of the day before had been reduced to only sixty men.

Captain Bourgey took possession of the house and ordered the Fifth Company to follow him. This was the company of Delaury, in which also there were no more than sixty or seventy men.

The two lieutenants had been killed. The two under-lieutenants were Escombet and Saint Felix. M. Bourgey, the oldest by rank, was to conduct the defence.

A few minutes after we had been installed we saw our men in retreat, passing near the house. Two officers, Captains Aubert and Vicard, had only time to take refuge with us in order to avoid the firing which was threatening, and also at the same time we received Commander Lambert, wounded in the ankle and supported by two soldiers. It was eight o'clock.

Rapidly M. Bourgey distributed his forces, and soon we heard a continuous discharge coming from both floors, from the ground floor, and from the roof, gathering a rich harvest from the Saxon forces.

We suffered also from the fire of the enemy, because the projectiles fell heavily upon our open window; but as they were coming obliquely from below, the soldiers warned, could very easily, by stooping just a little, avoid a greater part of the shots. At any rate, we took good aim, resting our guns on any support, and every ball counted.

I recollect that Captain Bourgey, our former professor of shooting, and Captain Aubert, both very remarkable marksmen, slaughtered the Germans as if they were ordinary game. They were on the second floor, and from there M. Bourgey conducted the defence, while in the other parts of the house Delaury and Escombet conducted the firing of their followers.

About half-past eight an incident happened. We had not eaten for thirty-six hours, and hunger tormented our stomachs cruelly. In the cellar some soldiers discovered many barrels of wine and beer, and upon the shelves of the closet were large jars of butter.

One can guess the result of the discovery. Soon our sergeant came to warn Captain Bourgey that many soldiers had invaded the basement, had opened the barrels, and were drinking with avidity.

The Captain went downstairs immediately, and noticed that some soldiers were really very excited. The moment was badly chosen for such a banquet. How to prevent the consequences of such a bad example, and forbid thirsty soldiers access to the barrels to slake their thirsts! Captain Bourgey, thanks to his presence of mind, solved the situation.

"But don't you know," he said, "that the Bavarians slept here last night, and that they poisoned those barrels?"

The effect was like a thunderbolt. All the soldiers fled, asking for an antidote, which M. Bourgey promised them if they repulsed the enemy and opened the way to the drug store.

Being quieted by this, our officers remained alone in the cellars, where they could refresh themselves, quickly dividing among them some biscuits with butter, and drinking glasses of wine pretended to be poisoned. Then they went upstairs. However, the cartridges were nearly all used. An under-officer was placed as sentinel on the roof, to keep the Captain *au courant* of the disposition taken by the enemy. The Germans, after many fruitless efforts to take us in front, tried an attack from the rear, by which manœuvre we were completely isolated, and in the centre of the Bavarian army. Our position was a desperate one.

As we were obliged to succumb without any profit to our cause, our officers discussed the question of making a sortie which, perhaps, would permit us to join our troops, who were in retreat. But this sortie; is it possible? To leave the house by the door was such a

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perilous adventure that none of us could escape death. They decided to make the exit by the rear, by making a hole in the wall with a bar of iron found in the court-yard.

The wall was thick and solid; the work advanced very slowly—so slowly that after an hour the hole was only made large enough for one man to pass. Our minutes were numbered. We would be obliged to abandon the house, one by one, creeping along, and besides, we should be obliged to leave Commandant Lambert, which we would not do at any price. Notwithstanding the supplications of this brave officer, who desired us to go without him, saying that the interest of the Fatherland should take the place of personal interests, we renounced the retreat.

After getting the opinion of all our officers of both companies, our chief decided that we would defend ourselves as long as any means remained. Besides, we had hopes that our troops would get us out of this difficult situation.

Alas! about ten o'clock, General von de Tann, warned of our desperate resistance, succeeded in bringing near one battery of artillery. But scarcely was it in position than the soldiers were killed with our bullets. Others took their places, and were killed in their turn. Finally the guns were protected behind some obstacle. Now we were at their mercy. A cannon ball struck the right wing of the house, and destroyed it with a great noise. The second projectile fell upon the roof, which it demolished and set on fire. Many men were killed by the falling débris; the bullets succeeded one another without interruption—we were surrounded by flames.

In the meantime the Bavarian Infantry, reinforced, profited by our bad situation, and advanced to the walls, where our bullets could not reach them. The situation was most critical.

In fact, in looking about, at the risk of being killed, the sentinel above saw soldiers were digging below the walls of our improvised fortress for the purpose of blowing us up in the air. I confess that at this moment many of our men were entirely disconcerted. The alternative of being blown up by the explosion or crushed under the roof destroyed by the artillery, and in either case to be roasted alive among the ruins, had nothing particularly pleasant, and was enough to move the courage of the firmest.

At the same moment the hurrahs of the Bavarians, and their bugle calls, announced that we were about to be annihilated, and they rushed to the pillage.

I remember besides that, notwithstanding the noise, I heard distinctly the cries of the German officers: "*Ergeben Sie sich! Ergeben Sie sich!*" ("Surrender! surrender!") We answered by bullets.

We were sustained by the tenacity and cold blood of our officers, who, in this dramatic crisis, preserved an astonishing presence of mind. I still see Commandant Lambert, lying suffering from his horrible wound, who urged us on to the struggle; I still see Captain Bourgey in many places at once, facing the storm in every place and giving us encouragement to hold out until the reinforcements approached; I still see Captain Aubert, stimulating our energy by showing the bodies of enemies killed by our bullets; Lieutenant Escombet, intrepid and audacious, boldly risking his life.

I see, too, alas! our comrades killed or wounded lying upon the floor of the rooms. How many broken arms and legs, how many crushed chests, how many open skulls! What blood!

About half-past ten Captain Bourgey was struck on the leg by a piece of wall detached by a cannon ball, and fell down fainting. His wound gave him a momentary shock, but was without gravity, and fifteen minutes later he was able to renew the combat.

At eleven o'clock we had only eleven cartridges. Our officers vied with each other for the honour of firing them and killing the last Germans. After this we could do nothing. We only stoically waited for the explosion under our feet.

Our agony was horrible.

Suddenly the door of the house, which we had barricaded with furniture, was violently forced open, and a crowd of Bavarians invaded the ground floor with bayonets on their guns. The horrible butchery commenced in the midst of the clashing of steel. But we were overcome, three fourths of those still living were wounded and exhausted; the struggle was too unequal.

When even we repulsed the assailants and went into the court. We fell in the midst of the enemy, whose irritation was at its height.

They rushed upon us to disarm and massacre us. We would have passed a sad fifteen minutes had it not been for the intervention of the Bavarian captain, M. Lissiguano, who saved our lives in turning aside these furious ones. I heard the generous adversary say at this moment in very good French:

"The unhappiness of to-day is upon you; to-morrow perhaps it will be our turn. I was eight years in your foreign legion in Africa, and I esteem the chivalric character of your nation. Honour, then, the courage of the unhappy! You are prisoners of war, and you have the right to be protected by the conqueror."

Then, Escombet, desperate, tried to shoot himself because he did not want to support the humiliation of captivity. It was M. Bourgey himself who wrenched away his revolver, and told him to preserve his existence which, later, would be precious to his country.

We were disarmed. The officers, however, by the special favour of General von der Tann, and on account of our heroic defence, kept their arms.

Before the intervention of Captain Lissiguano, we were literally plucked by the Bavarians, who had emptied our pockets and taken all our possessions. Many of our men succeeded in concealing their most precious objects by slipping them into their boots, and in that way they were seriously impeded in marching to Kencourt, where they conducted us.

There the priest gave us dinner. He placed beds for the officers, and the encampment for the soldiers, in the church. It is from the church that we followed the last phases of the battle.

But we must return to relate the episode worthy of being known.

We were disarmed, and we abandoned the house of combat, when one shot from the first floor struck one of the Prussian officers mortally. It was our last cartridge. It was fired by an Alsatian, a soldier by the name of Tapfkeit, from the Thirteenth Company, who sent to the enemy his last souvenir.

Two Bavarians rushed to kill the offender. He let them come, and at the moment when they approached him, he seized the revolver of the officer who was near and fired two bullets upon the aggressors, who fell to the ground.

After turning his pistol against himself, he cried!

"*A bas les Prussiens! Vive la France!*"

Then he shot himself. Honour this obscure hero.

LE VIER.

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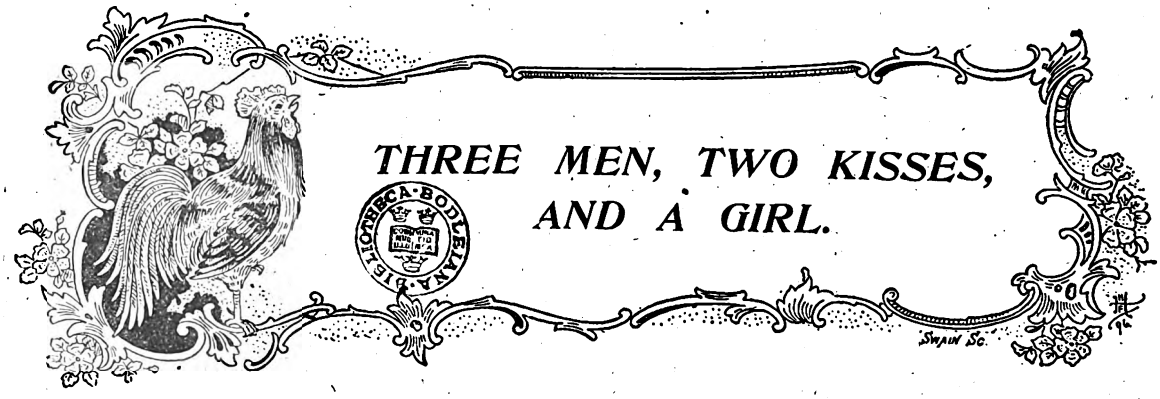

THREE MEN, TWO KISSES, AND A GIRL.

BIBLIOTECA-BODLEIANA

Major Penton,

To Miss Isabel Hobson *Dr.*

To One Kiss, delivered.....£1,000.

A prompt remittance will oblige.

This was the Major's Easter egg. Small wonder that he felt out of sorts, and that even three brandy-and-sodas utterly failed to restore his equanimity. This little bill epitomised a whole volume of incident. It was something like this:

A man named Harrington—who, by request of some member whose name no one has since been able to discover, had secured the privileges of the Major's club for a fortnight—was the cause of it all, and it happened on a certain "ladies' night," destined never to fade from the memory of poor Penton.

In the course of the evening there had entered a woman who was universally conceded to be a "poem of loveliness," and whom the Major characterised as a "dream." The Major, flattered by the reputation of being the most distinguished looking man in the club, was introduced, obtained the favour of a waltz, and afterwards retired to the card-room in a state of perspiration and tender sentiment.

By seeming chance—but, as the Major discovered later, by fell design—Harrington met him at one of the whist tables.

Harrington also had met and danced with the Major's "dream," and the Major, softened to temporary imbecility by his evening's experience, looked upon Harrington as a rival, and wondered what the effect would be if he quarrelled with a visiting member and called him out.

"How about a game, Major?" asked Harrington.

The Major looked round. They two were alone in the card-room.

"It would suit me exactly," replied the Major, "if we had two more to make out the hand."

"We need not play whist," said Harrington smoothly. "However, you probably prefer the society of Miss Hobson——"

"That is a matter, sir," replied the Major bluntly, "that lies entirely between Miss Hobson and myself. I am quite ready for any game you like."

The Major dropped into a chair, and Harrington smiled in an exasperating way as he placed the cards on a table, and remarked:

"I have an appointment with her myself towards the close of the evening. Delightful girl, charming."

The Major grunted as the cards were dealt. Such remarks by Harrington were highly distasteful to him. Without more ado they began to play, and, although the Major thought he played well, he was beaten easily, and soon relieved of his ready money.

Penton's animosity was expressed in his play. He would not have left the table at that stage for a cool thousand.

"I am out of money," he said, "but a cheque——"

"I don't want your money," interrupted Harrington, "but I have the honour to propose a wager worth while accepting—that is, if you dare accept it."

"Dare, sir, dare!" blustered the Major. "What is the wager, sir?"

"We will play one more game on this condition: that the loser pays the penalty by kissing Miss Hobson."

The Major was on his feet in an instant.

"How you can have the brazen impudence, sir, to suggest such a thing, passes my comprehension!" he exclaimed.

Harrington was not ruffled in the least.

"I admit," he said, "that the odds are greatly in my favour. If I lose, the great and plainly apparent esteem in which the lady holds me places me in a position to cancel my obligation without any great difficulty. You, on the contrary, should you lose, might have considerable trouble."

A red flush diffused itself over Penton's features.

"And do you presume to set yourself above me in the esteem of Miss Hobson?" he queried. "Egad! I'll play the game if for nothing else than to take the conceit out of you!"

And they did play it—and the Major lost. As he rose from the table he was well-nigh overwhelmed at the prospect before him.

"Difficult, almost impossible, as the task is for you, I shall yet insist upon your performing it," declared Harrington.

"I am a man of my word," replied the Major haughtily.

He was also a man of infinite resource, although he did not say it, and he did not think that to him anything was impossible, but he very shortly departed for his home to consider how best to proceed in the difficult matter before him.

To kiss a young lady, to do this deliberately and upon slight aquaintance—the task was herculean! The Major must be tactful, diplomatic. He must summon all his reserve forces and marshal them skilfully; even then he might meet his Waterloo. He could not go at this thing with dash and *verve*; he must be artful, courtly, and agreeable, and he must play a waiting game.

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There was one point in his favour; he suddenly remembered that the elderly lady who accompanied Miss Hobson had invited him to call. He had attributed this invitation to his handsome appearance. Here undoubtedly was the Open Sesame.

On the following afternoon he availed himself of her invitation. Fortune favoured him; Mrs. Maitland was out, but Miss Hobson was at home and would be pleased to see him.

Miss Hobson received him with delightful unconventionality. As they conversed, the fair one in some bewitching way made it seem as though they had known each other for years.

They first became familiar, then confidential, and then—— Well, they were looking at some etchings. Suddenly the Major's cherished ideas of tact, diplomacy, and a waiting game were cast to the winds. By an impulse that was irresistible he bent forward, kissed the lady at his side and straightened up with an air of martial dignity, his thoughts seeking to evolve an explanation which somehow wouldn't come.

But no explanation was needed. Miss Hobson simply laughed and went on looking at the pictures.

The Major was greatly disturbed. Was it possible that he saw the shadow of impending evil already hovering above his devoted head? When he left, Miss Hobson bade him farewell with an air of proprietorship which he did not relish. A rough hand had suddenly sounded a discord on the harp of the Major's fancy. Of course Miss Hobson was beautiful, charming, but—well, there were others.

The Major was a little disgusted with himself when he went to bed that night. When he got up he was greeted with the bill whose single item is duly set forth at the beginning of this veracious chronicle.

After mature reflection, the Major sat down and wrote the following note:

Miss Isabel Hobson,

Madam,—Your bill came duly to hand. I have no recollection of having ordered the goods invoiced; but, be this as it may, is not your price a little high?—Very truly,

J. Thomas Penton.

The following afternoon the Major had the great pleasure of reading these lines:

Dear Sir:—It matters little whether or not you ordered the goods. You certainly received them, and the courts hold this to be a bona-fide expression of debt. To refresh your memory, I inclose a photograph taken at the time goods were delivered. As to my price being exorbitant, please reflect that I could have made it two thousand as well as one.—Hoping for an early remittance, I remain, yours truly,

Isabel Hobson.

A cabinet photograph of himself in the act of kissing Miss Hobson had dropped on the floor. He groaned as he picked it up and looked at it.

At this interesting point a servant announced Mr. Ralph Summers, a friend of the Major's.

"I can't see him now," said the Major. "I just simply can't! Tell him to call again."

"But he says he must see you," returned the servant; "he says it is a case of life and death."

The Major could not resist this appeal, and he hastily tucked Miss Hobson's letter and the photograph into a convenient drawer and arose to meet his friend.

Mr. Summers was round of form, bald and florid. He was pallid, extremely nervous, and there was a wild glare in his eyes.

"Major," he said hoarsely, sinking into a chair, "you see before you a desperate man. I am ruined, sir. My character is gone, and when a respectable member of Society finds his character gone, what relief is there but in the laudanum bottle? Where can——"

"That will do, Summers!" broke in the Major. "You seem to imagine that you're the only man in the country that can have trouble. Egad, sir, you have no monopoly of despair."

"But you don't know it all, Major. Why, it's simply awful! To think that I, at my time of life, should rashly bet that I could—could kiss a certain woman in within twenty-four hours, and——"

"Wait a minute!" cried the Major. "Let me understand you. You made a bet that you would kiss a certain woman within twenty-four hours?"

"I did," was the hollow rejoinder.

"What, here?"

"Yes, here!"

"When?"

"A month ago."

"Was there anything else? Don't hesitate, Summers. You are not the only fool in this broad land. Unbosom yourself."

"It is all a trap," went on Summers hotly. "The man with whom I made the bet was in the scheme: the woman I was to—to kiss had also a hand in the plot. I kissed her, they photographed me while I did it, and now—now she threatens to sue me for five hundred pounds. It's blackmailing, but for me there remains only death or disgrace, unless you lend me this five hundred. That's what I came to see you about."

"Have you the lady's letters?"

"Yes, all."

"Give them to me—and the photograph?"

"I have that also."

"Let me see it."

Tremulously Summers produced a small packet of letters and a photograph and handed them to his friend. The Major looked at the photo and, as he had surmised, the young lady in question was none other than Isabel Hobson.

"This is a very serious matter, Summers, very serious," remarked the Major, with a dry cough, "and it is well that you came to me in your trouble. You have been very foolish."

"Don't chaff me about it, don't!" wailed Summers. "Haven't I borne enough?"

"If I promise to get you out of this, will you promise never to make a fool of yourself again?"

"Of course! But can you do it?"

"I will do my best. Call to-morrow at this time and I will report."

Summers went away and the Major smiled broadly as he seated himself at his desk and wrote the following:

Miss Isabel Hobson.

Madam,—Your letter is at hand, and the photograph is extremely natural; it exactly resembles another photograph which I have seen, and which was taken about a month ago. I inclose your bill against me, and also a bill against my friend. A comparison of the two bills shows that you are attempting to make us both pay for the same goods, and the courts hold that this is unlawful, to say the least. I, therefore, request that you return both bills to me receipted. If you do not, I shall be compelled to take the other horn of the dilemma. With you, however, it strikes me as being simply a case of Hobson's choice.—Truly yours, J. Thomas Penton.

It is needless to say that the bills came back receipted, and Summers never knew how his friend the Major had saved him. His friend the Major would never tell.

H. Blythe.

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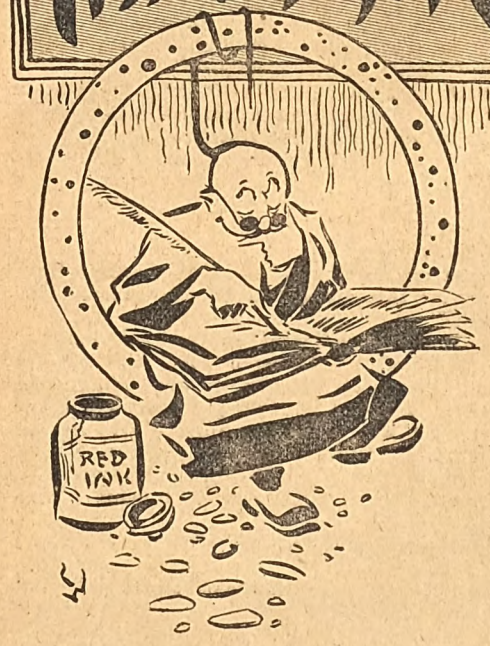
The Man Who was Left



This is the tale that was told by Lum Yu concerning the man Ching Ting.

It was New Year's Eve in Canton, and Ching Ting, the ivory carver in Curio Street, had cleaned up his shop, lighted his Joss sticks, and set up two little red tapers before the niche in the wall containing the tablet to the honour of the Earth God.

The front of his ten-foot establishment Ting had illuminated by hanging out a gay lantern, whereon was inscribed, in scarlet and gold, the words: "The favoured of Heaven."

An hour before midnight, having settled his accounts with the merchants, Ting had gone off as usual to the Temple of Longevity, in the Street of Accumulated Blessings, there to lay his offering at the feet of the great gilded Buddha, that watches over the life of every man, from the day of his birth till the day when, summoned to the World of Darkness, he leaves the World of Light.

Now Ting, you must know, was born in the fifth year of Kwong Si; and at the time of which we are speaking was the oldest man in the province of Twang Tung, being indeed no less than one hundred and eighty years old. Something over a century before Ting had opened the shop in Curio Street and married his fourth wife.

For more than a century and a half his name had appeared on the books of the Long Life Insurance Company as the annual subscriber of a silver dollar; and yet here he was on this New Year's Eve paying his devotions and presenting his offerings, just as he had been doing for a matter getting well on now for two hundred years. When Ting rounded the century, and showed no signs of migrating to the "family mausoleum," whither his sons, who had duly presented him on his sixty-first birthday with a very handsome piece of funereal furniture, specially designed for his own use, had already preceded him, his heir-at-law, distressed and dismayed, was advised to consult an astrologer.

"It was pretty evident," said the disinterested counsellors, "that the demons must be at work. It is quite possible, you know," said they, "for the evil spirits to keep the body living long after the soul has gone out of it, which is a dreadful thing for the poor soul, since it cannot get admittance at the gates of Yáma without its body, and must just roam about the Dark World, the prey of demons and devils, till its body is deposited in the Ancestral Hall."

The astrologer, however, couldn't complete his calculations, "owing," he said, "to disturbing influences;" and by-and-bye the heir died, and Ting, dressed in white, followed him, as he had followed many before him.

It was clear to the meanest intellect in Canton that Yáma, the Lord of Death, had forgotten the ivory carver, whose house in the Happy Valley had been waiting for him so long that it had cost fully as much to repair as it did to build.

The Long Life Insurance Company had certainly made a handsome penny out of Ching Ting.

Wives, children, neighbours, acquaintances, grandsons and great grandsons, Ting had seen them all depart for their new homes in the City of the Silent. Generation had succeeded generation, and he only was left—still hale, still hearty, feeling neither the weight of his years nor looking at one hundred and eighty, a day older than when he had just touched the half century.

Every morning, Ting entered his shop at the hour which had been his custom from his youth up, and, plying his tools with all the skill and dexterity which had made his name famous in every mansion and temple within a hundred miles, he worked all day at his trade of an ivory carver.

Ching Ting was a puzzle to himself. Sometimes he doubted whether it was right for him to be here after all his generation had gone—whether it wasn't, in fact, a scandal and a shame. That some people thought it most shockingly indecorus of him he knew.

Sometimes he wondered whether he hadn't better take the matter into his own hands and perform the happy dispatch.

But the thing that was past all understanding was that, whereas Ting had actually gone down to the "gates" twice before passing his fiftieth birthday, but, finding them shut, had returned, he had known neither ache nor pain since—and, from that day also, the man had never altered in appearance by a single hour. He was, in fact, invulnerable. Nothing harmed him. He walked scatheless through every danger. At the great earthquake the ivory carver came out unhurt, while his neighbours on either side were buried in the ruins. It

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The astrologer, however, couldn't complete his calculations.

was the same when the tornado swept away ten thousand houses—Wen and Yen were taken, but Ting was left. In the year of the Black Plague, this experience was repeated. No matter who suffered, no matter what happened, Ting lived on. And now, here was the New Year round again; and Ching Ting, to all appearances, as likely to see the next hundred as he certainly had seen the last. Why, it was a positive fact that Ting had actually announced himself that morning as being on the look-out for a new wife—the last Mrs. Ting, who was the twelfth in succession from the first, having left her disconsolate husband behind her six months previously. For, notwithstanding his weight of years, Ting, as we have said, was not perceptibly older on this New Year's Eve than on that other, which lay so far back, that one hundred and thirty years now rolled between. Fifty, he owned up to then; and to such as did not know his strange history, he was no more than fifty now.

Having settled his affairs then for the year, Ching went off with an easy mind to pay his devotions in the Temple of Longevity.

But on New Year's morning, the cup of cold water at the door of Ting's house told the passer-by that the ivory carver had been summoned, and had gone his last journey.

Ching Ting had fallen dead on his own threshold immediately after his return from the midnight service.

That was a busy day for the gossips.

By-and-bye, however, the truth leaked out; and sure enough, here again, there was a woman at the bottom of it.

The twelfth Mrs. Ting was a lady of an inquiring mind, and greatly was she exercised over the mystery surrounding her husband. Now it happened that about eleven months before she went from this wicked world, and left Ting a sorrowing widower, a very devout disciple of Buddha, a priest of the highest caste, had taken up his quarters in a monastery on the White Cloud Mountains, three hours' journey from the city. He brought with him a great reputation for learning and piety. It was even reported that Sam-Su, which was his name, could hold converse with the spirits in the Dark World. To him repaired the curious Mrs. Ting, eager to get his opinion of her husband's case. The holy man considered profoundly for a while, and delivered himself in these words:

"To every man who cometh into this world, is allotted a single page in the great Book of Account; and, when that is filled up, be it sooner or be it later, Yáma, the Lord of Death, turns it down, writes his name on the back, and sends for him. Why Ting's leaf has not been turned down my knowledge of the Sacred Books does not enable me to say. But, be it a thousand years hence until the leaf *be* turned down the man will continue to live. Yet, again, thou tellest me a strange thing—that on this man, Time leaves no imprint of its passage; whereby I know that, to the record of his years, Yáma has ceased to make the annual addition; but the wherefore I cannot tell."

Then the lady, whose curiosity was only stimulated by what the priest had told her, at once determined that, when her own leaf was turned down, she would lose no time in asking Yáma the reason why Ting's had been left; and, hinting to Sam-Su that she might probably have a communication to make subsequent to that event, she made a liberal offering to the pious purposes fund at the monastery, picked up her fan, and returned to the city.

Now, whether it was owing to anxiety to satisfy herself, or for any less praiseworthy reason, will perhaps never be known; but, very shortly after the interview with the learned priest on the White Cloud Mountains, Mrs. Ting's own leaf *was* turned down, and, for the twelfth time in his life, Ting was a widower.

Six months passed, yet no message came from the lady to enlighten the good man at the monastery. Sam-Su—for the story was told in the refectory whence it trickled out into the town—had decided that celestial occupations had left no room for earthly fancies—when lo! in a vision of the night, Mrs. Ting appeared to him, impatient to unburden herself of the news.

"There had been such a press at the 'gates,'" she said, "that she was kept waiting outside for weeks; and after getting through, the crowd in front was so great that she had only just succeeded in obtaining audience of Yáma."

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"'Most dread One,' I cried, 'I am the wife of Ching Ting the ivory carver. Twelve wives has he carried to the 'house in the valley,' and I, who stand before thee, am the last.

"'Seven generations have ruled in the city since Ting opened his eyes, and, lo! an eighth is springing up, and of all men of his year Ting only is left. Tell me now, I pray thee, why Ching Ting, whose years go back to

The holy man considered profoundly for awhile.

the fifth of Kwong Si, is living on the earth after all of his generation are with the spirits of their fathers.

"'Dear me!' exclaimed Yáma. 'Really! it's very forgetful of me. I remember now. One hundred and thirty years ago, I was extra busy; and, while turning over the leaves of my Book rather rapidly, one that was badly stitched fell out. It was nearly filled up; and having no time to paste it in then, I slipped it between the covers, and there it's been ever since. Now, I shouldn't wonder if that doesn't turn out to be Ting's!' —which sure enough it did.

"'Well,' said Yáma, pasting the leaf in its place. 'I'll finish this job now at once,' and filling up the page, he turned down the leaf."

"It was just at that moment," said Lum Yu, who told the tale, "that Ching Ting received his summons."

H. Hunter.

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READY ON THE 1ST OF EVERY MONTH.

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BY M. P. SHIEL.

SUMMARY.

YEN HOW, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet, and defeats it, but at a cost of all the ships but three, which are shortly afterwards chased and attacked by the Japanese fleet. Affairs now assume a serious aspect in Europe, and the British rout the Germans at New Brandenburg with a loss of 150,000 men. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (who are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison.

CHAPTER XVII. (*continued*).

THE Imperial prison stood—and stands still—in a great quadrangle of marble, fringed with stupendous avenues of long-haired trees of the banyan *genus*, being surrounded by a moat bridged by a number of marble bridges. The building itself is of marble, and of very great size. A stone's throw to the south stood the palace of the Austrian Ambassador, embedded in a bower of foliage; to the north, a hundred yards away, and separated from it by a lake overgrown with huge slumbering lilies and moon-leaved water-growths, stood the shaded palace of Yen How. The Imperial Palace itself was half a mile away by the broad avenue which stretched to its portals, but there was also a secret short-cut to it from the palace of Yen How.

It was the quiet hour of the evening-time, and the sumptuous landscape of the Imperial City seemed to faint and doze in a dream of lotus peace.

Leaning over one of the marble bridges that spanned the prison moat was an old man. It was Ni-ching-tang, the father of Foo-chee, one of the innumerable scullions who did duty in Yen How's kitchen. His day's work was over, and he was looking sleepily upon the dark and slumbrous water of the moat.

As he leant so, Sin-wan approached him hurriedly, passing across to his duties in the prison. Ni-ching-tang would not have heard the noiseless tread of the thick-felted slippers of Sin-wan; but Sin-wan spoke.

"Give good to you, Ni-ching-tang," he said. "Has his Might, the Governor, passed this way yet?"

"No, Sin-wan," the old man answered, and his eyes smiled, "fear nothing. He will not know."

"Know what, Ni-ching-tang?"

"That you are late—again."

Sin-wan leered.

"It comes of going to seek a little wife," he said.

"Pooh! it is nothing—if you are not seen. But a wife?"

"Ah-lin is her name, and she is the daughter of Lan-chaw-sing and Nan-lin, his wife. We will marry this moon. She is well formed both in face and body."

"What, with small feet too?"

"No small feet: but well formed in face and body."

"And she lives where?"

"In the third quarter, and the main street."

"Why, I have a son who lives near the main street of the third quarter."

"And what is your son's name, Ni-ching-tang?"

Sin-wan did not notice that Ni-ching-tang paused the merest fraction of a second before he answered.

"My son is called Cheng-lu," he said.

Then Sin-wan passed on, and entered the prison.

As he went in, descended some stairs, and walked along a dark corridor, he took from his bosom a small cylinder of ebony, round which clung a roll of silk-paper.

On the paper were six lines of writing, each starting from the top and going down to the bottom. Each line started with a date, and underneath the date came the instructions for that day.

This document had been painted by Yen How, with his own hands.

Yen How had stood over John Hardy, with watch and stethoscope in his hands. John had lain bound on his back on the marble floor.

Yen How had examined him from head to foot. He had felt the texture of his muscles, had palpated the calves of his legs, had held his pulse, watch in hand. He had applied the stethoscope to John's chest, and heard the wheeze; he had laid it over his heart, and made an estimate of the exact *timbre* of the beats, systole and diastole, veinous and arterial.

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When it was all over, he knew the precise truth about John Hardy's vitality, its quantity, its intensity, its whole diathesis. He knew just how much mental and physical torture the lad could bear, and for how long, without an actual cessation of life.

He was not in a hurry. He waited—John was well fed and nourished. It was over a week before the torture began.

Now, when Sin-wan opened the door behind which John lay in sleep, Ada Seward would no longer have recognized the pretty boy who had sat beside her in the music-hall, nor Bosey Jay the gallant fellow who had made her throb in an alarm of self-retention.

Broad streaks of absolute white mingled with his long fair hair. His bony hands clutched and trembled in his sleep like the hands of some aged miser.

At the first faint sound of the key in the door, he sprang with a bound straight to his feet, wide awake. He had learnt to be afraid now.

Sin-wan, as he turned the key, muttered something to two men who were now with him. They went away up a narrow stairway into a room above. Sometimes Sin-wan could fulfil his instructions alone; sometimes he needed auxiliaries. To-day he needed them, but not in the same room with him.

He gave a final glance at the directions under Day IV. on the silken scroll, and with studious brow ran over the points on his fingers. This was the ninth scroll of the kind, all covering a space of six days, with which Sin-wan had been entrusted.

Having satisfied himself that all was ready, and his instructions well in his head, Sin-wan entered the chamber and closed the door behind him.

The sight of that face had become a pang and a sickness to the soul of John Hardy. To all his tortures it was an added torture. It grinned in his nightmares. It was the devil of his Hades.

He sank back in a corner, pale as death.

Sin-wan never brought him his food; so that Sin-wan's face was associated in his mind only with agony. Yen How, who knew the Mind, and its secrets, had willed it so.

The room was not very small, but it was of stone, and damp. However, in one corner was a bed which was nothing less than luxurious, the coverings being of fine, padded silk. John Hardy had not suffered from cold; still less from hunger or thirst.

These were tortures far and away too elementary and obvious to occur to such a mind as that of Yen How. The body, by itself, is capable of intense pangs; but never is torture exquisite when it is wholly divorced from the mind.

Yen How's profound knowledge of this fact was proved when he said to himself:

"One of his tortures shall consist in the daily sight of —a Face."

Beside the quilted bed, there were in the chamber a table, on which was water and wine; near it, a cushioned chair; and a stool made of a hard, greenish-coloured wood, provided with a straight upright back, and cross-pieces in the legs. It could not be moved. It was cramped by iron rivets to the flooring.

The room was lighted by three Chinese-lanterns which hung above John Hardy's reach, and were lighted through holes in the ceiling near them.

Sometimes one, or two, or even the three went out, through some carelessness of the attendants; and even when they all burnt, there was not much light from them. But John's eyes had long since grown accustomed to the obscurity. He saw everything clearly.

One of the ingenuities of pain to which he had been subjected consisted in the mere appearance of Sin-wan without any sort of subsequent action on the man's part. Once Sin-wan had entered, leered round the room, and retired. The next day he entered, leered round the room, and retired. Was the ordeal over, then? A heavenly hope leapt in John Hardy. The next day Sin-wan appeared with a brazier crowded with white-hot wires.

Several times lately Sin-wan had entered, leered round, and retired. With every new entrance now, John hoped that on *this* day no new sword would pierce him. For to-morrow he cared not—only for *this* day his spirit cried to Heaven. But on many a day Heaven turned her ear from him.

He breathed in an agony of Hope, in an Arctic hell of Fear.

In the course of weeks his great mind had quite collapsed. He was now utterly demoralised and craven.

He knew neither morning nor night. He had lost count of the days and the weeks.

He did not commit suicide, because, at first, the means were not ready at his hand. It is not an easy matter for a man to dash his brains out against a wall. Later, when he looked round for the means to kill himself, an intense cowardice seized him. He clung desperately to life—only to life. Just one little spark, too, of his innate stubbornness lingered within him. After a torture, he would pray aloud that Heaven would send its swift Messenger upon him; but his obstinate will to live returned, if a day of peace were granted him.

Now, as Sin-wan showed his face, he cringed close against the wall with staring eyes of expectancy.

Was this a day of torture? or a day of grace?

What added a touch of intensest horror to the relation between this boy and this man was the fact that they had never exchanged a word. They were as remote and divided as two creatures of different planets. Sin-wan did not know a word of English, nor John a word of Chinese.

A day of torture, or of grace? He had ceased to care for the morrow; but *to-day* . . . !

A wild hope stabbed his heart. Sin-wan had no sort of implement about him. He could not torture without an implement. It was a day of—grace, then?

No. The Chinaman walked to the corner in which lay the cords with which John was usually bound. And he lifted them on his forearm, and he came to where John, half standing, half falling, cowered.

John had long ceased to make any sort of resistance to the binding process to which he was subjected by the brawny arms of Sin-wan.

During the operation this time he fainted. But terror woke him. He was placed on the high-backed stool, his arms bound behind the back, and his chest, high up to the neck, upon it. Underneath, his shoeless feet were bound to the cross-pieces.

He could not move his head backward, for the chair-back prevented him; forward he could move it about fifteen degrees, and from side to side about thirty.

What was in store for him? He was wide awake now. With starting eye-balls he waited.

Five minutes passed.

Then Sin-wan put his hand into his bosom, and drew out something.

It was a leather strap, about three and a half inches broad, and about sixteen long. At the ends were clasps.

He put it round John Hardy's neck, and clasped it. And now John could move his head neither backward, forward, nor sideways.

He sat with elevated chin, staring—a gaze of horror into vacancy. Yet he felt no pain.

He waited five more minutes, and the dim thought that reeled within his brain in a vertigo of woe was this: How long, how long, O Lord?

Five minutes, and then five more: and then he felt—something.

Yet it gave him no pain.

It was a drop of fluid—water, in fact—which had fallen upon his head from above.

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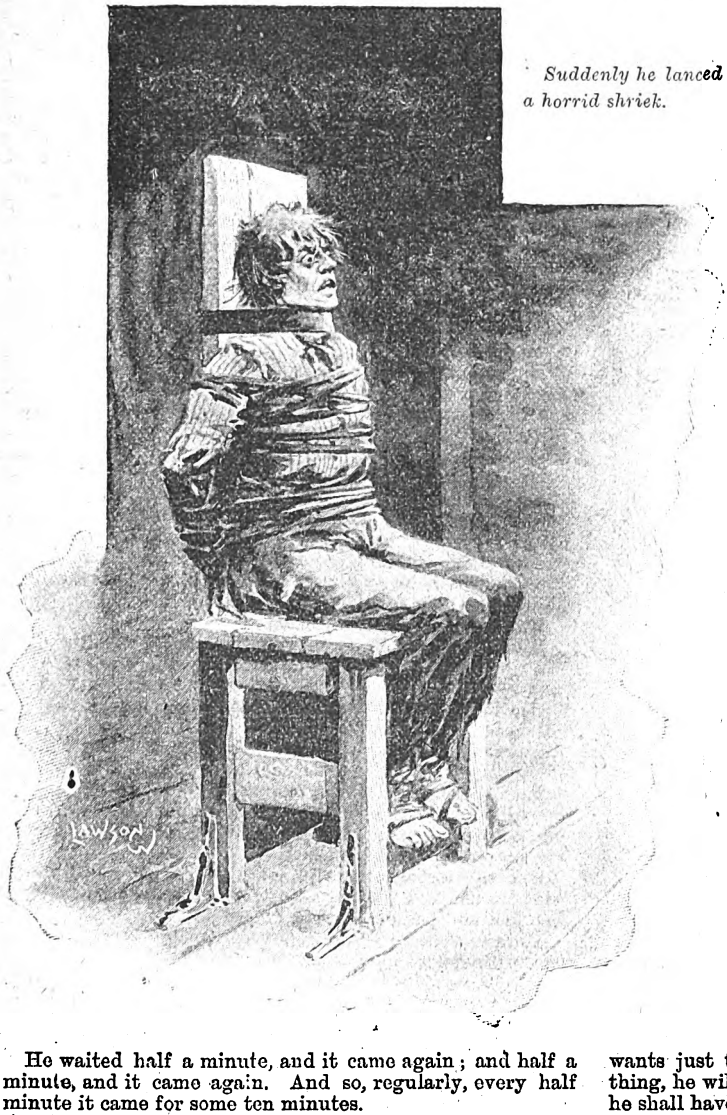

Suddenly he lanced a horrid shriek.

He waited half a minute, and it came again; and half a minute, and it came again. And so, regularly, every half minute it came for some ten minutes.

This, of itself, to an ordinary person, would be a misery. But by this time John Hardy was so familiarised with agony, that to him it was simply nothing. The slowly-dropping water collected on his head, and was trickling down his face, when he began to wonder, with a species of glad incredulity, whether this could be meant as a new torture.

He could have borne it all the night, and all the day, and thanked God for his clemency.

Suddenly he lanced a horrid shriek.

A drop of something else had fallen upon his head, and eaten into his scalp. It was a drop of strong oil of vitriol.

Would the falling of the vitriol continue? or the falling of the water?

The next drop was a drop of water.

But if it had been vitriol, and vitriol thenceforth regularly, John Hardy's agonies would have been far less acute than, in fact, they were.

In this was manifested the profundity of Yen How, that he knew how exquisitely to intensify the pangs of the body by means of the travail of the soul.

The next drop was water, and the next was water, and the next was water, and the next was—vitriol!

And now John Hardy cried out against Heaven, straining at his cords, and bawling like a bull.

But drop by drop from the ceiling fell the implacable fluid; not so many drops of water, and then a drop of vitriol, but with crafty variations, sometimes two drops of vitriol at a time, and then for minutes, not another.

Yen How, however, knew his craft too well to make such an ordeal last very long. Sin-wan had instructions that, as soon as the victim showed signs of madness or collapse, the torture should end.

Accordingly, when John Hardy ceased to cry aloud, and a red stream from his mouth trickled down his chin, his bands were undone, and Sin-wan cast his unconscious body on the bed.

* * * *

Just about the time that he did so, Ah-lin was standing before the incense-stick booth of Foo-Chee.

"It is not that I am bold, Foo-chee," she said, "that I come here to speak. But I must say what I have in my mind."

Here was blessedness, and a wringing of the hands, and an embarrassment of the pleased eyelids, and the favour of the upper gods, for Foo-chee.

"It is an incense-stick that you desire," he said, "and your name is Ah-lin, for I know it. And all the incense-sticks which I have are yours. For why? Because we stand and step together each day before sundown in the same company of the drilled—no other reason."

"It is a lie, Foo-chee," said Ah-lin, "there is another reason—though I cannot guess what it can be. But whatever the reason be, you must now throw it quite away. It was not for an incense-stick that I came—though incense-sticks are pleasant, and I have long desired one—but to tell you just that. You must throw it quite away."

"And for why?"

"Because another, who is greater than you, wants just the thing that you want. If you get that thing, he will kill you. In order that he may not kill you, he shall have the thing."

"Cruel, Ah-lin!"

"No, not I. You say what is not, not knowing, Foo-Chee. But he will kill you; therefore he shall have what you desire."

"Then I shall kill myself, not having what I desire."

"Cruel, Foo-chee!"

"You will feel happy if I live, Ah-lin?"

"Yes; and, therefore, I shall make myself feel unhappy by giving to another what you desire, in order that I may feel happy at the same time in knowing that you live."

"To feel happy and unhappy at the same time is mixed, Ah-lin."

"But it is better, Foo-chee, to feel happy and unhappy for a little hour, and then die."

Here was the practicality of the woman. Foo-chee pondered over it. Then he lifted his head and said:

"There is a riddle somewhere which I cannot solve, Ah-lin. Let us go, instead, to the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li for a meal, with fresh tea. And with you take three of these incense-sticks."

Ah-lin hesitated, and was lost. Foo-chee drew down the

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flap over his booth, and carefully adjusted the ring to the staple; then together they walked off on their heels; and their swinging pig-tails met and touched, as it were, knowingly behind them.

And at the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li they ate a hearty meal, with a whole *mitin* of fresh tea-leaves.

They were in the sweep of the force which underlies the world. It was the doing of the upper gods.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Chinese Iron.

The next day John Hardy, at the hour of evening, sat in his corner watching his door with a kind of wild-beast sullenness.

His nerves had an instinct of the hour when Sin-wan was due to appear.

So sick was his soul with misery after the ordeal of the

He ran now, with the stealthy feet of a man treading on hot embers.

day before, that he had eaten nothing since. His food lay untasted on the table.

He sat sprawling with extended limbs on the floor, watching the point of Sin-wan's expected entrance through the fierce and sullen corners of his eyes.

He had often had the thought of braining Sin-wan with one of the porcelain platters in which his food was left, or of strangling him with his pig-tail, or one of the ropes used to bind himself. As he sat there, the thought now recurred to him. His brain was in that condition in which thoughts are no longer semi-voluntary, but seem to come and go at random of their own motion, like the winds through the vacant heavens. He had, however, sufficient reason left to give no entertainment to this thought of attacking Sin-wan. His chance, if he ever had it, was long past. He was too hopelessly frail now.

He sat long, expecting. One of his lanterns went out; then another; in half-an-hour the third. He was in darkness.

Suddenly the lad started as though a sword had pierced him.

He looked eagerly towards the door; and then he said to himself: "No, no." It was too incredible; he must be mad.

"Mad, mad," he moaned, his head buried in his two arms, as he rocked himself slowly to and fro, with a regular motion like a pendulum. So he went on for about half-an-hour, his face hidden, with sometimes a moan, and sometimes a word. "What have I done?" he said wearily, in the thinnest whine: "What have I done—oh God, Father, God? . . . But now I am mad, mad . . ."

It had seemed to him as the third lantern went out, and left him in darkness, that at the edge of the door there was a long streak of semi-light—*that the door was open!*.

He had sense enough to know that the condition of his mind was one far and away removed from a state of ordinary sanity; and that his senses were, now, quite capable of playing him tricks. But when, after a long time, he lifted up his head, there, still before his eyes, was the streak of light.

He sprang to his feet, and his pallor of death assumed a hue of even more absolute wanness. Groping limpingly along the walls, he made toward the door. But, on the whole, it was rather to assure himself of the optical illusion which he supposed, than with the expectation of finding the door really open, that he proceeded.

But the door was really open.

What made his heart go bumping and bounding within his ribs was the look of Providence—the hint of God's finger—in the fact of the lanterns *all* going out at the same time, when, by some extraordinary means, the door had become unfastened.

But though one step meant salvation, and one instant's delay meant death, yet he could not take the step. The sudden shock of hope—the sudden suspicion of Heaven—all but killed him. He dropped back against the wall, panting, panting, trying with his right hand to force back the violent galloping of his heart.

But the instant that he could move, he moved. With wide mouth and gasping chest, he cautiously pushed back the door and passed through it.

Toward what? Toward certain capture? It must not be supposed that he was now in a mental condition to give the question even a single thought. He went through the open door precisely in the way in which a wild animal passes through the open door of its cage—instinctively toward liberty. He lived by moments. At *this* moment he was free; to the next moment he gave not a thought. He simply walked forward as a stream flows downwards—because it is a law of Nature.

He found himself in a long corridor; and yonder, halfway down the corridor was—a man.

The man's back was turned toward John; and he was bending down, cleaning a blue-glass lantern.

It was at this sight that the first notion of the impossibility of his ultimate escape occurred to John Hardy; and, with this appreciation of the impossibility, came also the ravenous Desire, the frenzied Hope. As he slid swiftly back behind the door, and drew it upon himself, he was no longer a mere wild creature of instinct. He looked forward—he reasoned.

He waited, fearing worse than death to stir the door. Then he had a sudden horror which pricked him like a goad to action—if Sin-wan came? It was his hour!

He very slightly pushed back the door, and peeped out. The corridor was empty.

He ran now, with the stealthy feet of a man treading on hot embers. His feet were bare, and made no sound. He had on a shirt and a pair of trousers. But the shirt was filthy, and the trousers flapped in long rags all down his legs. His hair reached to his shoulders.

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At the end of the corridor was a door. He pushed it lightly. It did not move. He forced his shoulder against it. It was locked.

He was as much a prisoner as before, then? Immediately after the first intolerable sinking of the heart, he could not believe it. A vague, but real, faith was in him now. The mere fact that he was where he was proved Providence. He believed, dimly, that God, now, was willing him to be free, wild as the idea was, far off as the probability might be.

He looked swiftly round for some means of escape; and, there, sure enough, was a tall window in the side of the corridor, slightly open.

He ran to it, and looked down. It opened on to another corridor twenty feet below.

Twenty feet! The distance was infinite.

Underneath the flapping rags of his trousers one could see the red and livid patchwork of his flesh, where it had been nipped, and pinched, and burnt, and pricked, and bruised in half a hundred agonies. How could he leap twenty feet? It was as dreadful to him as to an infant. Like the very aged, he was afraid "of that which is high."

But as he looked again he saw a short rope hanging over the window-sill by which he could help himself down.

And now, at this sight, it is a wonder that some suspicion of the fact that all these happy chances were only part of another elaborate torture did not enter his head. But his brain was so pre-occupied with the idea of *Providence*, that nothing of the sort occurred to him.

With endless pains he managed, with the help of the rope, to reach the lower corridor, and at once, with the same stealthy trepidation, he set out, running, in the same direction in which he had so far come.

At the end of this corridor also was a door; and at his push it opened.

Now he was in yet another corridor, at right angles to the first and second. In which direction should he turn? He did not care. He would be guided right by the Hand that led him. Away to the right he went, with tottering gait, treading on embers, hugging the wall.

If only his heart would cease its awful thumping! Surely, surely, through all that vast building, through all Pekin, they would hear the echoes of that labouring bosom! So it seemed to him.

His white, wide lips were twisted awry in his effort to take in and expel his noisy breath.

As he ran along in this excess of agitation, he suddenly remembered the battle of Shoreham, how he had been cool in the midst of sounding cannon and angry war. Could he not still be so? Was he so much changed? He made a weak effort—a faint self-assertion of the old John Hardy. But in another instant he forgot the effort. It was far from him.

He reached the end of the corridor, and was about to turn to the left, when, there before, him, he saw two Chinamen, near to him, talking. They were standing in the middle of the passage which he had to pass.

Had they seen him? Had they heard the labour of his heart? Apparently not: they remained deep in talk.

Must he lurk still till they moved away? Would they not come his way?

Suddenly, behind him, down the length of the corridor in which he stood, he heard a faint sound. He looked and saw a man approaching him. He was between two dangers.

The man's eyes were bent meditatively upon the ground. He came swinging toward John Hardy.

The night had not yet come, though it was near. The corridor in which the two conversed was not dark, but it was much dimmer than that in which John stood. It was necessary for him to move—the third man was coming near.

He stole forward, inch by inch, sideways, with his chest against the wall, and his face twisted round, watching the two talkers. He came near them—he was opposite to them—by a stretched out arm they could touch him.

Stealthily he crept, slowly as the movement of a glacier; he was past them. And he was no sooner past them than, with incautious haste, eager only to be on—to be on—he sped away. During those instants of slow motion he had passed through all the terrors of the grave.

The man's eyes were bent meditatively upon the ground.

The two men calmly continued their talk; the third came up and joined them. John Hardy went onwards undisturbed.

For quite half-an-hour he stole forward, all fears and tremors, like a thief in the night, through three halls, over a courtyard, along two more corridors, without anywhere meeting anyone.

The slumbrous gloaming deepened. He began to think himself lost in this endless structure, without hope of finding an exit.

But at last he saw an oblong of distinctly lesser obscurity; he knew that this must be a door of exit from the prison.

Could it be true? Was he really about to escape into the open day—under the sky, the clouds? He leapt forward. And as he did so, a man stood in the doorway, and leant his back against the door-post.

It was far from light now, but John Hardy would have felt the presence of that form and face in the darkest midnight. It was Sin-wan.

John was still in full career to make for the door, when his eyes fell upon this man; and, like a shying horse, he bolted aside. A door, as he touched the wall, gave way before his pressure. He rushed through, mad to put a world of distance between him and that face. As he hastened forward, in the dark now, he stepped upon nothing, and tumbled headlong down a flight of stone stairs.

He had hardly time to pick himself up when he knew that someone was behind him, slowly descending the stairs, humming a tune. And he knew that it was Sin-wan.

Off he rushed again; and again, in five minutes there was light. He stood between two walls about five feet apart, about ten feet long; and, at the end of them, was a portal, painted green, half open; and beyond the portal, he saw—trees!

He was free! and yet he shuddered. Behind him was Sin-wan, coming, coming; and before him, the open gate; but the whole of the space between him and the gate, and between the two walls, was paved with broken glass.

There was not an inch of harmless ground upon which to place his naked feet.

But Sin-wan was behind. He stepped forward, and reached the gate, and passed through it, running.

Every footprint which he left behind was a footprint of blood.

Still onward, panting heart! The hand with which He leads is surely rough—but still, is He not leading?

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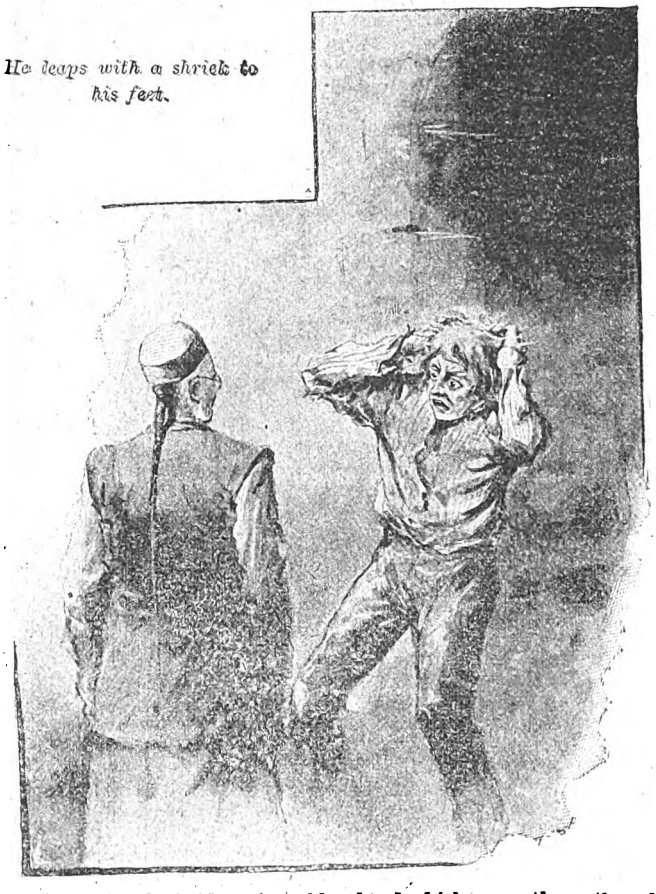

He leaps with a shriek to his feet.

And now for the bridge of marble ahead which spans the moat. He reaches it, and starts, and stops.

There, in the middle of the bridge, leaning over the parapet, looking at the water, is a man.

This gauntlet also John must run. Crouching against the opposite parapet, he crawls forward.

His lust to be free is now a thousand thousand times more intense than ever before. Every danger that he has so far escaped has added to his terror a deeper terror, and to his hope a wilder frenzy. Like a beast, he crawls forward on hands and knees, step by step, without a sound.

But just as he is exactly opposite the man, the man turns quite round. John Hardy leaps to his feet. They are face to face, and eye to eye.

All is over then. He has been seen.

But no! What means those groping hands, that hesitating step, as the man turns slowly away? Is he *blind?* Can those eyes see *nothing?* So John Hardy believes. Here at least, is Providence, and the leading hand.

Away, once more, toward the palace of Yen How, and then down the long avenues to the portal of the "Imperial City." This part of the way he remembers, having passed through it before. Onward, in the shade of the great trees he limps, leaving behind him his trail of blood. He meets no one. He is under the open sky, among the leaves sighs the evening wind.

He reaches the great portal, and, strange to say, there is no one there to bar his exit. He passes out. He is in an open space—beyond the Imperial walls—which properly belongs to the "Chinese City."

So far he has escaped. A strange feeling of security rushes upon him, and, with it, an overwhelming, speechless gratitude. He drops to his knees, his face turns upward in an ecstatic agony of love to the skies, washed in tears, out stretch his arms in adoration.

But between his eyes and the sky comes a face, and between his stretched-out arms comes a form. He leaps with a shriek to his feet, recognises the face of Yen How, and faints in Yen How's arms.

The slightest possible smile wrinkled the corners of Yen How's eyes.

"Pooh!" he said in English, "it is nothing. Why such a cry as that? It is your own fault, boy. You ought to have known that Providence—if there is such a thing—never works in these outright ways. Yen How's providence does—but Yen How is a smaller fellow altogether than the Big Ones above—if He is there at all. Is He there? Is He there? Ah!—may be, and may be not. But just now it is Yen How for you, and not He. The man cleaning the lanterns, and the two men talking together, and Sin-wan, and the blind man—they all saw you, you know, boy, because Yen How put them there to see you. And it is hard to escape from Yen How, whose Ada Seward you have kissed, and whom you have tried to shoot lillee white boy. And Yen How is not done with you yet—not yet—not yet. But those English!"—here he ceased to speak to the unconscious form in his arms, and continued his meditative soliloquy in Chinese—"those English! They are just like devils for fighting! Only 150 or 200 of them, they say, at Kiao-chau, and six weeks gone, and they not killed off yet. Stupid Japanese ship-captains to let them get away in that fashion. However—ah, lillee English kisser,"—he addressed John Hardy again—"wouldn't you like to be with the 200 white men at Kiao-chau now? I think you might be able to play some tricks with their help, too. But Yen How has you tight—Yen How the toad, the frog, eh? Stop, though, isn't there something in your Bible about a plague of frogs in the land of Egypt in the Pharaoh's time? Yes, surely,—yes. Well, now, how would you like a little plague of frogs in your land of England, eh? Ah, well, it is near. It is not far off now. . . . ."

At this point a man appeared; Yen How handed him the limp body of John Hardy, and walked up and down a long time that night under the shade of the trees of the Imperial avenues.

About this time there were two men outside the Imperial precincts who ought to have been within them. One was Sin-wan, and the other was the father of Foo-chee, Ni-ching-tang.

Ni-ching-tang went to the dwelling of his son Foo-chee, whom he loved, in order that he might see Foo-chee, and receive from him the reverences due to a father. And, lo! Foo-chee was not there; and Foo-chee's booth was deserted.

Said Ni-ching-tang:

"Now, where can Foo-chee be?"

Sin-wan went to the dwelling of his promised wife, Ah-lin, to see her, and receive from her the reverences due to a husband that is to be. And, lo! Ah-lin was not there.

So Sin-wan said:

"Now, where can Ah-lin be?"

Now, Ni-ching-tang was shrewd, and Sin-wan was shrewd. So Sin-wan said:

"Ah-lin is not far from the booth of Foo-chee."

And Ni-ching-tang said:

"He who knows how to find Ah-lin is far on the road to the discovery of Foo-chee."

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And Sin-wan set out to go to the booth of Foo-chee, and Ni-ching-tang to go the dwelling of Ah-lin. And midway between the dwelling of Ah-lin and the booth of Foo-chee, these two men met in the street. It was Ni-ching-tang who spoke.

"Ho! ho!—late hours—late hours," he said (and he half hid his face behind a sportive hand)—"late hours, and a merry courting-time."

Sin-wan was struck dumb. Ni-ching-tang knew that Sin-wan had no right to be out of bounds at this time, but Sin-wan did not know that Ni-ching-tang had no right.

"A merry courting-time?" said Sin-wan at last; "but it is not so with me, Ni-ching-tang."

"Well, after all, pleasure is pleasant to feel," answered Ni-ching-tang, still harping on the same string; "and they will not know in the prison, Sin-wan, for who will tell them?"

"Pleasure is pleasant to feel, yes," said Sin-wan; "but it is not pleasure which I am feeling now, Ni-ching-tang."

"And why not, Sin-wan?"

"Because Ah-lin, of whom I told you, is away from her home; and my mind is telling me that she is making someone else happy instead of me."

"Ho! that is bad. And who is that someone, Sin-wan?"

"He is called Foo-chee."

"Soh! And you are now looking for Ah-lin?—I see."

"I am looking for Foo-chee."

"And for why?"

"To kill him."

"Soh! to kill Foo-chee. Well, that is the only way. But has Foo-chee no brother, no father, who will kill you back again?"

"I do not know."

"With keen tortures?"

"Poh! I do not think of that."

"With dreadful agonies of the brain and the liver, Sin-wan?"

"No! I do not think of that. He is a botherless dog, a seller of incense-sticks."

"Well—well, do your will, Sin-wan. It is the only way. As for me, I am not feeling happy, too. I have a son, who has an enemy. And I am going to look for my son now, that I may hear from him whether it will be necessary for me to kill his enemy or no."

"Well, then, may you do well, Ni-ching-tang."

"And you, may you do well, Sin-wan."

And so they parted. But they neither of them found Ah-lin and Foo-chee that night; for they did not think of looking into the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li, where the two young people again were that night.

So Sin-wan and Ni-ching-tang hurried back, both of them, to the Imperial precincts, making an inward vow that on the next night they would procure more time, and do better. *(To be continued.)*

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THE SECRET.

The room is in darkness save for the light of a shaded lamp. In the white bed lies a woman—a woman young and beautiful. Seated by the bedside are two men—the woman's husband and the doctor. The husband has watched there for three nights without sleep.

The doctor rises and feels the woman's pulse. While his hand is on her wrist the husband anxiously scans his face.

"Well, doctor?—Well?"

For answer the doctor shakes his head.

"No hope?"

"No hope."

"Heaven have mercy!"

"She may perhaps regain consciousness for a short time before the end; there may be—there often is—a final rally. Meanwhile, I fear I can do nothing. Perhaps you would rather that I left you?"

"No; stay."

The doctor walks to the end of the room and looks out of the window into the night.

The husband covers his face with his hands, and thinks. This young life that was now ebbing away—had it, so far as he was concerned, been happy? Had he anything to reproach himself with?—No. Thank Heaven! Everything that she had asked for, she had received. He had lavished riches on her—he had lost friends for her—he had given up his little ambition for her. He had lived for her—been her slave, and people had laughed at him for it. No man had loved her—could have loved her—as he had. Perhaps the fact that he had not gained her easily, had made him treasure her the more. For he had had to teach her to love him.

When first he had asked for her, she had said she could not love him. But gradually her feelings softened toward him. Trouble came upon her family. He allowed her poverty to make no difference to him. He asked for her once more, and this time she consented. Only a few months ago she had told him, what he had never known before, that she had, for the sake of marrying him, broken off a secret engagement to another. That drew him still closer to her. And now he and she, who loved one another so well, are to say good-bye for ever. He prays Heaven to grant him one little favour, and that is that she may speak to him just once more. It would at least make parting easier for him.

* * * * *

Suddenly a long-drawn sigh from the bed, and the woman sits up. He eyes slowly open, and she stares straight before her.

In a moment the husband is at her side, and he clasps her hand firmly within his, as though he would by force prevent her leaving him. Then he puts his arm gently round her neck and kisses her tenderly upon her forehead. But, as his lips touch her, she shudders through her whole frame with fearful quivering, and pushes him from her, as though he were something repulsive.

"Roy!" she cries, "Roy! Where are you?"

The man at the window starts as though shot, and clutches nervously at the curtain.

"Roy! my darling!"

At this the doctor slowly turns and moves towards the door.

"Should you require me," he says huskily, his eyes fixed strangely upon the slender figure upon the bed, "I am in the next room."

The husband bows, and the doctor passes unsteadily out—not into the next room, but into the street.

"Roy! Roy! Oh, why don't you come, Roy?"

The husband's name is not Roy.

"Loved one, here I am, your husband—darling, kiss me." And again he leans over her, and again she shudders, more fearfully than before, and again she pushes him from her.

The man is dumb now. Once more she speaks.

"Oh, Roy, do come! He is keeping you from me, I know he is! I am dying, Roy! Oh, come—come! I want you to say that you forgive me, Roy. We have met so often and you have never spoken about our—they forced me to marry him, Roy. Oh, dear, darling Roy, do come! For I have never loved him, Roy—never loved him." Then more loudly still, "Never loved him." And then there is another sigh, and she falls back and then there is silence.

* * * * *

Out in the darkness a man stumbles blindly along, and passers-by who know him wonder if it is possible that the usually grave and dignified Dr. Leroy Jennings is intoxicated.

* * * * *

The room is in darkness save for the light of a shaded lamp. In the white bed lies a woman—a woman young and beautiful, from whose tired body a soul, tired at last from its torturing burden, has winged its way into eternity. A sudden rush of air through the slightly raised window causes the light to flicker, gasp, expire. All is dark now. "Never loved me!" sobs the man at the bedside. "Never loved me!"

Frank Hillmore.

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A Prize for Poets—Spring and Otherwise.

Here are a number of little verses with the last line in each missing. A Prize of One Guinea will be sent to the person who supplies the greatest number of what we consider to be the best.

All you have to do is to take a sheet of paper, put down the figure corresponding to the verse, and write alongside of it the line you think would be the most appropriate.

Then attach your name and address, inclose the slip in an envelope marked "Verselet," and post it to the Editor of *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., to arrive not later than Wednesday, April 13th.

A copy of any book the winner may care to name will be presented to each of the next best twenty-five.

1.

THERE was an old man of Rheims,
Who was troubled with horrible dreams,
So they fed him on cake
To keep him awake,
.....

2.

THERE was a young lady so gaily
Went off to see Barnum and Bailey,
But she gave a loud shriek
When she met the first freak,
.....

3.

A GIRL in a moment of pique
Gave her lover a slap on the chique.
Not a word did he say.
But he left her that day,
.....

4.

THERE was a young cook in a kitchen
Whose smile was so sweet and bewitchin'.
That policeman astray
Were proposing all day,
.....

5.

THERE was an old man from Peru
Who had nothing whatever to do;
So free from all care
In foul weather or fair,
.....

6.

THERE was a young scorcher of Ham,
Who full speed on his bike used to cram,
But he's no scorcher now,
For fate is to plough,
.....

7.

THERE was an old man who said naught
When people all stared at his wart;
But he grinned with such glee,
They grew frightened of he,
.....

8.

SAID the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher
To a hen: "You're a beautiful creature."
And the hen, pleased at that,
Laid an egg in his hat,
.....

9.

THERE was a young person of London,
Whose elegant shoe-string came undone;
But she said, with a smile,
Some men walk a mile,
.....

10.

THERE was a young lady of Troy,
Whom several large flies did annoy.
Some she drowned at the pump,
Some she killed with a thump,
.....

11.

There was an old maid of Havanner,
Who steadily thumped her pianner,
Till the neighbours with glee
Abolishèd she,
.....

12.

There was an old man of Vienna,
Who lived upon tincture of senna.
When that did not agree,
He took camomile tea,
.....

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A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels.

CHAPTER IX.

At the Saint-Landry Tavern.

The Rue de la Calandre was occupied, in the reign of Philip Augustus, exclusively by taverns of the lowest description, from which all sorts of horrible sights and sounds emerged at intervals from nightfall till dawn. Wantonness and Riot held high carnival, with Brute Force as King of Revels and all the basest of human passions as his attendant satellites.

It was in a scene of this description that Agnes de Méranie, the chosen wife of the King of France, elected to take part.

She arrived at the tavern when the orgie was in full swing; all restraint had been thrown off, and men, women, nay, even children were revelling madly in the wild carouse. Montruel remained outside as directed, and drew back into the darkest corner he could find as his only chance of safety from an assault that might easily prove fatal. Maître François Gauthier was sitting on an up-turned barrel half asleep. These nocturnal revels had long lost all charm for him, and he lazily opened one eye when an extra loud shriek told him some girl was in danger of having her head broken, or the clash of weapons promised the added excitement of blood-letting.

If Agnes de Méranie had gone in with her face uncovered, her entry would have evoked no curiosity, for the costliness of her dress was no uncommon thing among the women who frequented this place, but she had put on a small dark mask, and the first one who saw her called out:

"A mask! Who's that?"

In an instant she was surrounded by a crowd of excited, more or less intoxicated bacchantes, each one of whom looked ready to lynch the intruder.

But she was not to be daunted, so, raising her voice, she cried:

"Hola! Maître Antoine Cadocu! Will you not protect the guest you have yourself invited?"

"Let's take her to Catherine, and she'll soon scratch her eyes out," shrieked one of the infuriated girls.

Cadocu was still sitting where Montruel had left him, but the table was covered with flagons he had emptied, and his left arm was thrown round Catherine's waist. He had just kissed the girl in the middle of her song, and was praising her singing in amorous tones when Agnes's cry reached him. Catherine jumped up with blanched cheeks and a suspicious look in her eyes.

"Who have I promised to meet to-night?" he said in a thick voice.

"I don't know!"

"Well, then, if you don't know, sweetheart, it must be a rival! Now don't clench those pretty teeth. Oh, Cathos, you're just mad about me!"

"Now then, you others," he shouted, "let her come in if she says I've sent for her, and if she's lying you shall punish her, my dears."

He took another draught to clear his head a little. Agnes crossed the room, still wearing her mask and followed by the tittering, gibing crowd of envious women.

"A mask!" growled Cadocu, "how in the world am I to know who she is?" Then an idea seemed to dawn upon his clouded brain, and he welcomed her with a riotous laugh.

"She's come! Here's a game! Come along, my beauty, I was expecting you. I don't have a Queen to see me every night!"

The word Queen was taken up and repeated on all sides with various comments. Agnes advanced quickly, but Catherine was before her, and tried to get between her and Cadocu, who, however pushed the girl aside, saying roughly:

"Get out of the way, you've had your turn! Now it's hers!"

Catherine slunk back with tears brimming over through her long lashes, for she really loved her capricious master.

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Agnes bent down and whispered something in his ear to which he assented with a vacant smile.

"All right. Don't be afraid. I won't tell any tales."

Catherine dried her tears and prepared to watch closely what this stranger was doing.

"It is the Queen, and I'll be revenged on her!"

Cadocu put his arm round Agnes and drew her down to the empty seat beside him, for he had reached that hazy, indiscriminating stage of intoxication in which one person was pretty much the same as another. An hour earlier Madame Agnes might have appealed to his ambition and gallantry to some purpose, but now he was too far gone to do more than nod with indifferent approval at her artful cajoleries. She tried to interest him in her plans, but though he seemed to grasp the sense of what she said he had not the energy to follow it up: "Let's enjoy ourselves!" he hiccoughed.

"Yes, yes, let's enjoy ourselves," she answered readily, for she still hoped to humour him into acquiescence.

"*Ma foi!* If I'd been certain you'd come, I'd have drunk a little more to make me jolly. Now, I can hardly keep awake." His head fell forward, and then he roused himself with a jerk, and François Gauthier brought a block of wood for him to rest his arm upon. This change of posture seemed to wake him up a little, and he turned to Agnes:

"What can you do to amuse me?"

"Anything you like."

"Can you sing?"

"They used to call me the nightingale in my father's land."

"Ah, your father was a brave man, a fine fellow Can you dance?"

"Like Terpsichore."

"Umph! Don't know her. Can you drink?"

"As much as you like, Maître Antoine," was the unblushing reply.

During this cross-questioning the men and women had been gathering round in a semi-circle, but they dared not come too near, for, drunk as he was, this man was still their master.

Cadocu struck his fist on the table and called out:

"Catherine, Alix and Jeanne, come here!"

Two pretty, saucy girls responded at once to his voice, but the third, Catherine, waited a few seconds, and when she did come her eyes were again wet with tears.

The one named Alix advanced to the table at a sign from Cadocu. She was a splendidly developed girl, with broad shoulders and strong frame, but with a face marred by signs of excess.

"Alix, here is one who boasts that she can drink."

"All right! then we'll drink together."

Agnes de Méranie had not boasted without some reason. In all the festivities at the Louvre she had been Queen of the revels, and from her earliest youth her jewelled drinking-cup had been emptied with a frequency and persistance that would have done credit to a trooper; but then her beverages had been of the rarest and choicest description.

She now seized the cup out of which Cadocu had been drinking and filled it up to the brim. The sickening smell of this strong decoction made expressly for Maître Gauthier's customers nearly choked her, but as she saw a frown gather on Cadocu's brows, she summoned all her determination and emptied it at a draught.

"Now you, my lass," he said, handing the cup to Alix.

"I shan't drink out of that thing!"

Agnes flattered herself that the cup was too large for her rival, but, to her infinite surprise, Alix chose the very largest she could find, and began to fill it with the one Agnes had used. It contained exactly twelve times as much. The girl lifted the huge vessel with both hands and set it to her lips. The veins stood out in her neck and her face grew purple, but she drank on to the very last drop before setting it down. With a gasp for breath she handed it to Agnes saying:

"Now it's your turn again!" Seeing that her rival hesitated, she laughed harshly:

"Oh! that's only the beginning! I can do better than that."

Agnes was too clever not to know when she was beaten, so she took a diamond clasp from her mantle and offered it to Alix, saying sweetly:

"I am afraid I must ask you to excuse me, I am not used to this wine."

She hoped to avoid unpleasantness by this generosity, but Cadocu snarled angrily:

"She can't drink a bit!" and Alix threw back the clasp disdainfully.

"I don't want your jewels! I saw what you gave away outside the Nôtre Dame this evening!"

"Jeanne, come here," called the Captain of the Free-lances.

The girl who obeyed his command was one of those in whom the poetry of motion is born, not made. She danced

"A mask! Who's that?"

as naturally as she breathed, and every movement was a fresh revelation of grace and beauty. Agnes had no scruple in showing off her prowess, and she danced well, with the suppleness and elasticity of her race. Flushed with wine and fired by her keen desire for conquest, she surpassed herself in one of the graceful classic dances then in vogue at the court, and which had been imported from the East

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by the Crusaders. Cadocu looked on carelessly, and yawning wearily, he turned to Jeanne:

"Come, child, show her how to dance, for she doesn't seem to know much about it."

Jeanne cleared the table with one light bound, and forthwith began one of those bewildering terpsichorean feats in which the exhilarating joyousness of the gipsy alternates with the seductive languor of the East.

"That's what I call dancing!" said Cadocu, when she had finished. "You don't dance well, madame!" He tried

He fell on his knees before her.

to drink again, but his hand was so unsteady that the contents of his cup found its way on to the floor rather than into his mouth, which was perhaps as well.

"Now, Catherine, *ma mie*, it's your turn."

Catherine's spirits had risen in exact proportion to Agnes' discomfiture, and she now came forward with sparkling eyes and a heart confident of victory. She placed herself in a graceful pose in front of her lord and master and bided her time.

Philip Augustus was a great lover of the old romance songs of heroic deeds, and Agnes had wiled away many a weary hour for him by her sweet singing of the ballads of Roland and Arthur's Knights. She had a beautiful voice, and was complete mistress of the art of managing it, so she took the lute confidently and began a soft prelude to one of her favourite songs. Even that uncouth rabble listened spell-bound, for that which is really beautiful touches a soft spot in the most degraded minds; but one ear was deaf to the witchery of her music, for Cadocu seemed to become more and more irritated by it. At last he said impatiently:

"Enough of that! Do you think we want to listen to that miserable dirge, madame? We might as well be in church. Take the lute from her, Catherine! She can't sing, she can only wail."

This time Agnes realised that this man was not to be won by her, and she regretted her own folly in having exposed herself to this humiliation. Had she succeeded she would not have felt the slightest shame at the step she had taken; but, with the bitterness of failure, all the degradation of her position forced itself upon her mind with hideous reality.

Catherine snatched the lute away and struck up a stirring song of the Free-lances, which she sang with a dramatic power and thrilling sweetness that appealed strongly to her hearers. She concluded with a sneering allusion and a look of malignant triumph towards Agnes, who sat with bowed head and tightly locked fingers.

Cadocu woke up during the wild melody, with its swinging rhythm and haunting refrain, and now drew Catherine once more to his side and kissed her warmly. The girl's face beamed with delight, and she nestled closer to him as he leant on her shoulder and turned to Madame Agnes contemptuously:

"As for you, madame, you have entirely spoilt our evening. Look how quiet they all are! and at this hour I like to go to sleep to the tune of their wild frolics! I called you a queen when you came in, but you're not even that, for Ingeburge of Denmark was the King's wife before you, and no queen would have come to such a place as this, risking her good name and her crown."

"But who's to know?" gasped Agnes under her breath.

"The King knows *all!*" repeated Catherine maliciously.

The well known words struck terror to the wretched woman's heart.

"And if you're not the Queen," pursued Cadocu brutally, "you're no better than these girls here. Not so good in fact, for you're not as beautiful as the poor girl whom your lover, Amaury Montruel, had strangled yesterday morning, and you can't drink, dance, or sing as well as some of them can! So get along with you, for you're no good here!"

After this long speech, spoken at intervals and jerked out in disjointed phrases, Cadocu relapsed into his drunken stupor.

Catherine clapped her hands with a triumphant laugh, and the mad turmoil began anew. Agnes de Méranie fought her way to the door through the thronging, jeering mass of humanity, and escaped in a sorry plight from the scene of her shameful escapade.

CHAPTER X.

A Royal Eavesdropper.

As soon as she reached the street, Agnes de Méranie, choking with rage and mortification, looked round for Montruel, burning to vent her fury upon him. Not seeing him directly, she uttered his name in a low, hoarse whisper, which brought him from his hiding-place in a second.

"Ah!" she groaned, "why did I not take my dagger to that vile den! Sir!" she said turning upon him fiercely, "you lured me into an infamous trap!"

"I—did?" he stammered.

"Silence. You're a coward and a traitor!" she hissed as she took him by the shoulders and shook him violently to and fro in the strength of her passion. Then, as it reached a climax, she struck him sharply across the face with the gold tassel of her girdle. Having thus exhausted her fury the reaction set in, and she fell fainting at his feet in the gutter of the Rue de la Calandre.

The sight of her helplessness completely disarmed her

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lover's natural anger, and he lifted her inanimate form tenderly in his arms and bore her to his house.

Half an hour later they were on their way to the Louvre, Madame Agnes showing no external sign of the agitation she had undergone, save that she was a little paler than usual. Montruel's heart was still heavy and sore within him, first for her headstrong behaviour in going to Cadocu at the tavern, and then at the thought of her savage injustice to himself. When they had reached the Royal Avenue, she stopped suddenly and looked earnestly at him, then said coolly:

"Don't think any more about what happened to-night. I was mad at the time, I think, and I should not like to think that those few minutes had cost me the regard of an old and true friend."

"Madame——" he began tenderly, with a look of infinite love in his eyes.

"That's all right, then," she interrupted hastily. "I see you have forgiven me, and will not think any more about it. It makes my heart much lighter to think I still retain your faithful friendship."

She spoke without emotion, but gave him her hand and suffered him to hold it even after he had kissed it passionately.

"My Queen! I am yours till death! but tell me, shall I not punish that ruffian for his insolence? One word from you, and my archers shall surround the house and burn out these vermin in their hole. Not a man or woman shall live to breathe a word against the Queen's fair name!"

"Thank you. I understand; you think I am afraid and you are trying to reassure me; but, remember, there is the King to protect my good name, he would never believe a word against me. I need have no fear, my lord!"

Then her mood changed, with that swiftness that made her character such a bewildering enigma, and she drew nearer to him, trembling slightly.

"No, no, it's not those robbers and wantons that I fear. I want you to avenge me on her who stands between me and the Crown—who robs my life of all peace and security, and whose existence enabled that brute to tell me to my face that I was no Queen!"

"You have my solemn pledge, madame, that your rival shall soon cease to breathe."

"How can I believe you, when day after day nothing is done? As long as she is above ground my life is in danger, my rank is a mere sham. This council that is to be held may change my fate in an hour!" Her voice sank almost to a whisper as she continued:

"Amaury, do you know what a woman will do for the man who realises the dearest wish of her heart?"

Montruel's heart gave a sudden leap, and then seemed to stop beating as he looked down on her beautiful face, from which all trace of anger had vanished, and which was softened and idealised by the moonbeams that were playing lovingly on it. The pleading pathos in her voice and the emotion with which she seemed overcome, raised his blind infatuation to its fullest height, and a vista of possible delight opened before him. He fell on his knees before her and pressed both her hands to his lips again and again.

"I have said too much," faltered Agnes, whose rôle it was to play the part of alarmed innocence when his passion became too pronounced, "I must be more guarded, or our intercourse will be fraught with danger to me. We had better not meet again for the present, not till you have welcome news to give me."

Amaury began to protest that he could not live without a sight of her, but she was firm, and checked all further remonstrance by playfully laying her hand upon his lips and bidding him sound the horn, for they had reached the palace gates. The draw-bridge was lowered, and they entered the Louvre in silence.

In the large hall where Philip Augustus had received "Maître Adam" that morning, the rosy light of an Oriental lamp was illuminating the pale, emaciated face of Montruel's secretary and confidant, Maître Samson.

If Philip made it his boast that "the King knew all," it is certain that he knew a great deal, and, moreover, that he possessed a genius for acquiring knowledge that would not have come to him in an ordinary way. He was as subtle as Louis XI. and had the faculty of choosing his agents so that they were both secret and reliable.

Maître Samson was standing, cap in hand, before the King, who was reclining on a divan, shading his eyes with one hand from the light.

"Ah, ah," he was saying, "so Amaury Montruel had this girl killed, had he?"

"Yes, my Liege, three miles from Paris, on the way to Etampes."

"Because she knew his secret?"

"Yes, your Majesty, as well as you and I know it."

"And how did you find this out?"

"I met the men coming back from murdering poor Agnes."

"Oh, the poor girl was called Agnes, was she?"

"My Lord Amaury gave her that name," said Samson pointedly.

The King moved his hand so as to study more closely the crafty face before him.

"And when you met those men, what were you doing near Nôtre Dame with the King of the Basoche?"

Samson fidgeted about uneasily for a minute or two, and then, with an expression of undisguised admiration, he replied:

"I should like to know who could hide anything from the King! I was there on business about Madame Ingeburge."

"What about her?"

"Your august Majesty knows that better than I do, of course, but since you deign to ask me, it is my duty to reply. My Lord Amaury wishes to excite the Parisian mob in favour of Madame Agnes, who is still very jealous of Madame Ingeburge."

"Ah!" said the King, looking involuntarily at the door

The King opened a manuscript beside him.

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through which Agnes had appeared just as Eve was leaving him that morning. "So you think that the Queen is jealous, Maître Samson?"

The man made no answer; but looked as if he had more to say and dared not begin it.

"Have you nothing more to tell me?"

"Nothing more," he repeated uncertainly, "no—I don't think——"

"Then you came here to-night expressly to tell me the

She came towards him.

story of that poor girl's death?" demanded Philip with a searching look.

Still Samson shuffled his feet and made no answer.

The King opened a manuscript beside him and said curtly:

"Then if you have no more to tell me, you can go."

His visitor moved towards the door, but instead of opening it he stood still, and, turning his cap round and round in his hand, began:

"May I venture, without presumption, to ask your most gracious Majesty a question?"

"Oh, you've not gone yet? Ask as many questions as you like."

Samson's courage rose and he came back into the room.

"Is my Lord Amaury at the Louvre now?"

"He ought to be here."

"That's another matter," said the wily clerk with a smile, "and Madame Agnes——?" Here he stopped, till the King looked up inquiringly, which he took as permission to go on.

"Is she in her room?"

"Where else should she be at this hour, knave?"

"If your Majesty would deign to say, yes or no."

"Well then, yes, of course the Queen is there," said Philip petulantly.

"Is your Majesty quite sure?" persisted the spy.

"*Quite* sure."

"Your Majesty has seen her there?"

"Yes, I *have* seen her there, you impudent scoundrel!" cried the King, losing all patience.

"Then I have no more to say than humbly ask pardon for having trespassed on your Majesty's most valuable time," and bowing low he made for the door, intending to go out this time; but the King called out testily:

"Here, come back! You're not going to get off like that, you insolent varlet! How do you dare ask *me* such questions?"

"Because—because——"

"Speak out like a man, and tell me the truth, mind, or it shall be the worse for you!"

"Your Majesty shall hear the truth. If Agnes the Fair had been alive, I should not have thought twice about it, but she's dead, and there's no other woman so like the Queen in all Paris."

"Keep to the point, fool, I don't want to hear all this!"

"I made a mistake, sire, I must have done, that's all—" stammered Samson, for the King's eyes were blazing with anger.

"What mistake?"

"I thought, your Majesty must pardon such a wild idea, but I thought that I saw Madame Agnes walking alone with Sir Amaury Montruel down the Rue de la Calandre about ten o'clock to-night. They were close to the tavern where Cadocu and his men go and drink together."

The King burst out laughing, and Samson, with all his guile, could detect nothing forced in his merriment.

"Madame Agnes alone with Montruel, and on foot in such a place and at such an hour! Why, man, you must be mad or drunk! Go home and sleep the drink out of your addled brain!"

Samson made his way out of the room as best he could, feeling that he had made a fool of himself this time. His royal master's mood changed as soon as he was alone. The clock struck mid-night, and Philip repeated thoughtfully, even sadly to himself the words he had so mockingly thrown at Samson.

"Alone with Montruel in the Rue de la Calandre, and on foot at ten o'clock at night!"

He seemed surprised as well as perturbed, and after a moment's reflection he got up and crossed the room to where the heavy silken hangings concealed the door of the Queen's apartments. He pushed them noiselessly aside, and, stooping down, looked through the key-hole like any other jealous or suspicious husband.

"I wonder what she'll tell me, for she's not there, the knave was right so far! No doubt she'll try and persuade me that she never left the room, for she is a woman, and all women are liars in such a strait as that."

As he said this to himself, he heard the creaking of the iron draw-bridge outside, and muttered, as he resumed his seat:

"She has just come into the palace, and a few crowns to the guards will make it all right, so that I shall hear nothing."

He smiled bitterly, and Samson's words rang in his ears with haunting clearness, quickened by his own discoveries. He sat thus in moody cynicism, till he heard a sound in the adjoining room. Then there was a rustle of silk, the curtains were drawn back, and as he looked round, Agnes stood smiling on the threshold.

"Have I waited long enough, my Liege?" she asked, in a soft, caressing voice.

"Have you been waiting then, *ma belle mie?*" was the equally tender response.

She came towards him with a swift, light tread, and murmured:

"I am always afraid of stealing from France any of those precious hours which her beloved King devotes so willingly to her welfare."

She raised her face timidly to his, and he bent down and kissed her white brow, which was still cool with the night air.

"He knows nothing!" she thought triumphantly.

"Alone with him, on foot in the Rue de la Calandre, at ten o'clock to-night!" said Philip Augustus to himself.

But his features told no tales, and Agnes retired to rest calm and smiling in her fancied security.

(To be continued.)

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WHY ARE WE NOT ALL CORPULENT?

This is a question we find answered by the latest specialist in corpulence, a man who, in our opinion, has done more to cure this distressing incumbrance than all the other so-called adipose-therapeutists together. We have Mr. Russell's new edition before us, entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure," wherein he explains that many men can eat an abundance of everything and yet appear lean and hungry, while the next unfortunate cannot eat but scantily without building up a huge frame of unweildly bulk. Thin persons, the author explains, generally have a very strong liver, which vigorously separates from the blood any superfluity of its fatty constituents: *per contra*, the liver of the victim to obesity is constitutionally weak, hence it fails, without assistance, to throw off the carbonaceous and fat-forming foods. The book from which we derive this information is published by Mr. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., who has succeeded in manufacturing a purely vegetable compound which has an almost magical effect in the reduction of unhealthy fat. Experimentally it has been given in large doses to those who only carry an amount of fat conducive to the proper production of heat, and the result is that the decoction will not have the remotest effect—not the slightest reduction of weight takes place, while in the case of a superfluity of unhealthy adipose tissue the individual frequently loses 2lb., and much more in serious cases, in twenty-four hours. We should have liked to have pursued this matter further, for it is far more interesting in our opinion than experimenting upon bees, rats, cats, and such like, for what may appear startling in the results of certain foods given to the smaller animals may not be so conclusive or applicable in the case of human beings. We can with pleasure advise our readers to get this book and read for themselves, and, moreover, no one can complain of the price, as it only costs three penny stamps.—*North Bucks Times.*

HOW TO BECOME THIN.

We have received a careful treatise on obesity which we recommend to those who wish that their "too solid flesh would melt." A stout person may pant and groan and sweat under his or her burden for many a year without feeling the necessity of making his last will and testament; nevertheless, when the imperative time does come to make provision for the disposal of his worldly goods, it is very frequently found that the fatal disease is simply a development of corpulency, which checked in time might have added ten years to his life. That corpulency is a disease is very clear, and there is no reason why it should not be regarded in an equally serious light as consumption or any other disease. Yet it is made light of and ridiculed, and the unfortunate possessor of too much fat, instead of securing the sympathy of his fellow-men and women, gets the credit of being a person of gross and intemperate habits, a glutton in fact. Thus, when we see a picture of a fat monk or squire, there is almost invariably present also a big venison pasty, a fat capon, and a flagon of wine; so it is that, unconsciously, and as it seems unjustly, we always associate a big corporation with big feeding. In the treatise recently published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London, whose treatment for the cure of corpulency has become so popular that "doing Russell" has become almost a household word, he clearly proves from his experience in a vast number of cases brought under his notice that stout persons are usually the most temperate. He also makes it very clear that corpulency is a disease, and a dangerous one, too, and while insisting that it should be treated as such, strongly disapproves of the system of attempting to remove superfluous fat by a course of emaciating drugs; pointing out with truth that even where it is possible to get rid of a few pounds of fat by this dangerous means, the reduction is only temporary, and the fat returns more rapidly than it left, and one does not want to be taking physic for ever. In contrast to this doubtful method of procedure, he attacks the disease, as it were, at the fountain head. The medicine he prescribes does not lower, but builds up and tones the system; in short, his aim is to *eradicate, to cure* the disease, and that his treatment is the true one seems beyond all doubt. It is beyond all doubt efficacious. It is perfectly harmless. It is agreeable to take. It does not necessitate semi-starvation. The effects are generally permanent. It is a most exhilarating and strengthening tonic. Send for his book; it is forwarded on receipt of three penny stamps, and well worth reading.—*Ilkeston Pioneer.*

A POSITIVE CURE FOR CORPULENCE.

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure," and is the cheapest issue (only 3d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London. Our space will not do justice to his book; send for it yourself. People are wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treatment for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principal, if it has become at all firmly fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious, that there ought to be no difficulty about their acceptance when once they become known, and, as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertake to reduce a person say 7lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and then prove it conclusively. So it is with Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only.—*Cork Herald.*

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CONSULTATIONS FREE.

D O. B. wants to know if trains to which dining saloons are attached are licensed to sell intoxicating drinks. ———No, they are not. The only way in which a train could become licensed premises, as the law now stands, would be by getting as many licenses as the number of licensing districts it runs through. No licensing authority can license premises outside of the territory it has jurisdiction over.

Gunner writes: "I have often wondered about the total weight of the shell poured into Sebastopol during the long siege. Have you any idea of it?" ———It was estimated that the batteries of the allied forces threw 30,000 tons of shot and shell into the besieged city.

A. J. is left-handed. He is rather proud of it, for he believes that a tendency to the left is the sign of a strong mind.———It is quite true that such a statement was made years ago by a scientist, but no conclusive demonstration of the theory has been forthcoming. It may interest you to know that nearly all lions are "left-handed." Livingstone and others noticed this peculiarity. When a lion wants to strike a forcible blow he almost always uses the left paw.

James H.—There are more than one hundred and seventy known species of the fly. Think of this when the warm weather comes.

Unbelieving has seen it stated that the physician to the late Tsar began life in the humble capacity of a butcher's boy, and he supposes that Dr. Zakharin succeeded to such an extent because medicine is not much practised "in that benighted country," as he calls it.———You will be surprised to hear that there are some very clever doctors in Russia. As some proof that medicine is not neglected there, I may tell you that nearly forty medical journals are published in the country; there are twenty in Petersburg. The oldest of the medical journals was established twenty-three years ago, another is twenty-one years old, and a third has eighteen winters to its credit.

C. J. asks where fuller's earth comes from.———Chiefly from Bath and one or two places in Surrey. It is dug out in the form of soft stone and, if required as a powder, has to go through a process of manufacture. It is curious to note that large quantities of this substance are imported by the Americans from Bath; one would expect that within such a vast tract of territory sufficient could be obtained for home use.

Superstitious writes to ask if it is true that blood stains can never be removed?———Not from paper, and only with difficulty if they are old from cloth. There is no reason why you should be superstitious about it, the reason is because of the presence of iron in the blood.

D. L.—There are no fewer than sixty persons in Great Britain whose annual income reaches the respectable figure of £60,000. There are nearly two thousand more who receive amounts varying from that sum down to £10,000, while those in possession of £5,000 to £10,000, exceed three thousand in number. Some five thousand people are credited with incomes ranging from £2,000 to £3,000.

Nan.—It is a curious fact that some of our sweetest flowers are unavailable for purposes of perfumery; their scent cannot be extracted. Our chemists imitate these perfumes to meet the demand while they sigh for the discovery of some process which will make extraction possible. Sweetbriar is an instance.

A. L. K. has heard a story about snails which he refuses to believe. Some of these creatures were collected a few years ago off the coast of Lower California and shut up in a box. Six years later, on being placed in some moist earth, one of them began to move about. He thinks this story must be a "Californian."———Such a thing is not improbable at all. Snails are very tenacious of life, and instances of the kind you mention are recorded in many books of reference.

Mac.—The output of Scotch whisky last year showed an increase of 30 per cent. The increase in Irish and English whisky was respectively 13 and 10 per cent. So you are not likely to run short of your night-cap yet, Mac.

Careful.—The first "run" on banking institutions in London was in 1667. Many Lombard Street goldsmiths and bankers had lent out the money entrusted to them and, being called upon for payment, were unable to meet the demand. A crowd of creditors and others assembled and a riot followed in which four bankers were hanged at their own doors before order could be restored and the angry creditors persuaded that they were not being swindled.

Yank.—You are right. Specimens of every gem known to the lapidary have been found in the United States.

Operator.—The total length of the world's telegraph system is not much under 5,000,000 miles. This is exclusive of 1,814,000 miles of submarine cables. This mileage is apportioned as follows: Europe, 1,765,000; Asia, 311,000; Africa, 100,000; Australia, 218,000; America, 2,500,000.

Sawdust would like to know the loss in thickness caused by wood shrinking. ———This is rather vague, but perhaps the following information will satisfy you. Pitchpine beams will shrink from 18⅜in. to 18¼in., spruce from 8½in. to 8 3-8in., white pine from 12in. to 11 7-8in., yellow pine a trifle less, cedar beams from 14in. to 13½in., elm from 11in. to 10⅞in., oak from 12in. to 11 3-8in. Of course, there may be variations.

H. M.—"Fiasco" originally meant a bottle or a flask. When the Italian glassblowers detected flaws in the vases they were blowing, they made an ordinary bottle of the failure, and hence the name.

Slow, after admitting sorrowfully that he has great difficulty in grasping the significance of large numbers, continues: "I have read articles about the enormous number of soldiers which constitute the 'war footing' of Continental armies, and have tried to imagine what they would look like if assembled on a desert with their ammunition waggons, etc. But I can't do it. Can you give me a 'popular' illustration?"———Perhaps this will help you. If we could have all these men drawn up in single file, with their guns and their ammunition and baggage waggons, the length would be about 24,000 miles. Marching day and night, it would take nearly a year to pass a given point.

Traveller, whose business took him all over France some half-dozen years ago and who has just had another tour of the kind, says that he believes there are fewer foreigners in that country than there were. Is it so? ———Statistics show that there are now 74,000 less than the number stated five years ago. The estimated number of foreigners in France at the present time is 1,027,000.

Micky asks: "How is the age of whales ascertained? I have heard that it is by a similar process to that employed with trees—by rings or layers."———Something of that sort. The age of the whale is calculated according to the number of laminæ, or layers, of the whalebone, which increases yearly. From these indications, ages of 300 to 350 years have been assigned to whales.

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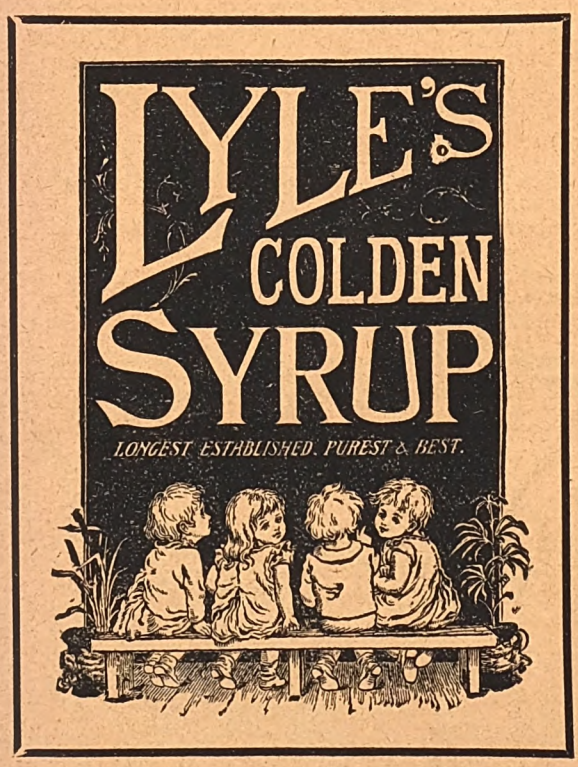

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 485.] For the Week ending April 16th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

The Story of La Guenca.

THE evening train was on the point of leaving Madrid for Seville, and I was congratulating myself on having secured an entire compartment for the night, when the door swung open once more, and a woman bounded in—I can find no other word to describe the almost panther-like agility of her movements—and seated herself opposite to me.

In another instant we were steaming out of the station. The quiet *nonchalance* with which the new arrival leant back against the cushions, the repose of her whole attitude, contrasting as it did with her somewhat energetic mode of entrance a moment since, roused in me a faint sense of curiosity. She was dressed in some clinging, soft material, and a large mantilla, draped low over her forehead, veiled her head, throat, and shoulders.

As my eyes became more accustomed to the dim light afforded by the solitary oil-lamp, I could trace the outline of a slender but exquisitely moulded figure, and catch swift glimpses of a cameo-like profile, of a full and somewhat sensuous scarlet mouth, and handsome, sombre, deep-lashed brows, that gave a look of energy which was yet inexpressively piquant to her face.

The train sped along swiftly and noisily. My companion was gazing steadfastly out into the night. I was gazing furtively at my companion. Suddenly she turned and looked full at me. Such a glance! In the densely dark pupils of her eyes there was a flash as of yellow flame. For a moment they looked almost phosphorescent. Involuntarily I closed my own eyes for an instant. When I reopened them her face was transformed, her long lashes were half drooped, her lips curved in a faint smile. The almost diabolical expression of a moment since was changed into one of half-conscious, feminine coquetry.

The swift metamorphosis startled me. It also aroused in me a decided feeling of interest. Who and what was she? The answer was not easy to find; for in no country in the world is it more difficult to gauge a woman's social status by her outward appearance than in Spain, where the liberty of manners and customs on the one hand and the national dignity and pride of bearing on the other, constantly lead a stranger into most awkward mistakes.

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It was still early in the evening, and sleep was far from me. I resolved to start a conversation.

"Will you permit me to smoke, señorita?"

"*Si, senor, con mucho gusto*" (Yes, señor, with great pleasure,) came the answer, accompanied by a charming smile.

As I was lighting my cigar, she drew from her pocket a dainty silver case, took out a cigarette, and asked me for a light as simply and as naïvely as though it were the most natural thing in the world that she should join me. Leaning forward to hold a match for her, I was astonished at the marvellous perfection of her features. But again I met that strange glance—a tawny gleam like that in the eye of a beast of the forest as it watches its prey.

"What an awfully handsome woman!" I thought, recalling with a shudder the old southern belief in the evil eye. She smoked with half-closed eyes and a dainty appearance of relish.

"We will soon be in Aragues," she said presently, "and then we go to Alcazar de San Juan, where we stop for supper. Do you know this route, señor? No? I have been over it any number of times."

"Aragues!" shouted the guard. "Five minutes' stop!"

We both alighted. I was longing for a breath of the cool night air. As I sauntered back towards my compartment, I saw my *incognita* in a low but eager conversation with a dark, picturesque-looking fellow. From the frequency with which they glanced towards me, it was easy to guess that I was the subject of their conversation. And from the malignant look in the man's eyes I inferred that he was probably a jealous lover.

As he assisted my companion into the carriage, two sentences caught my ear distinctly: "*Sos les bengoros le ligueren*," he growled with a side-look in my direction, and then he added in softer tone: "*Stebe te garabe.*"

It was by the merest chance that I understood him. Some years before I had come across a little book on the dialect of the Spanish gipsies, and as I had become quite interested in it, I still remembered enough to catch the significance of his words. "May the devil take him!" was the amiable wish intended doubtless for myself; and the second, "God guard thee," was his adieu to my companion.

The mystery was partially solved. She evidently belonged to one of the numerous bands of Spanish gipsies; and judging from the deference with which the fellow had spoken to her, and attention of homage shown to her by a little group of swarthy nomads by whom I saw her surrounded in the station at Alcazar, where we stopped at midnight, I judged her to be a person of some rank and importance amongst them.

Being very fond of my creature comforts, I fell asleep on leaving Alcazar, and when I awoke the sun was shining brightly in at the carriage window.

"Have you slept well, señor?" asked my charming *vis-à-vis* amusedly.

"Delightfully, I must confess, although I should blush for having done so in such charming company."

"Leave flattery for Frenchmen and Spaniards," she answered with a touch of pretty disdain.

Seen in the clear light of the day, her beauty was simply dazzling. I was lost in admiration of her exquisite features. But there was a sort of uncanny fascination about her face, and her trick of smiling brilliantly with her lips, while the eyes remained sombre and threatening, gave one cause for reflection.

A beautiful woman and a dangerous one, who would be capable of any cruelty, and treachery, but alluring, subtle. Involuntarily the thought came to my mind: "God help any man who falls in love with her!"

"You seem to be travelling with quite a suite, señorita," I said presently. "I saw you surrounded by friends at Alcazar."

"Ah, yes, those are my people."

"And you are——"

"We are travelling artists returning to Seville. Flamencos, who"—with an enigmatical smile—"earn their living by dancing."

"You seem, also, to tell fortunes, as I perceived yesterday."

She grew very grave.

"It is quite true," she said slowly. "I can read men's past in their eyes, and their future in the lines of their hand."

"Will you not read my fortune?" I asked, laying my left hand, palm upwards, on hers, which was cold as ice.

There was a moment of perfect silence. Then her sombre eyes looked straight into mine.

"You will meet, unexpectedly, a friend in Cordova. If you love him you will do well to warn him not to attend our dances in Seville."

She ceased abruptly.

How had she guessed that it was my intention to stay in Cordova?

"What of myself," I asked. "Will you not tell me something of my future?"

The locomotive gave a shrill whistle. We were gliding into the station.

"Later, señor," she said, "in Seville."

"But how?—when?" I persisted, my curiosity being aroused. "I do not even know your name."

There was a little crowd of her people at the door of the coupé as the train stopped. Her truculent-looking admirer seemed to lead the band. A smile brightened his handsome, evil face as he helped her to alight. As they moved off, she paused, and glancing back over her shoulder with an infinitely graceful movement of her beautiful head, she called to me:

"Do not forget, señor; we will meet again in Seville."

II.

It was fair time at Cordova. The boulevards were lined with long rows of booths, laden with articles of every description. There were circuses, shooting-galleries, strolling players, merry-go-rounds, and even an improvised ball-room.

A little knot of people was gathered on one of the open plazas. Drawing nearer to see what was the attraction, I recognised, to my surprise, the central figure. A tall, handsome blonde young man, with a laughing, boyish face, who was amusing himself by scattering handfuls of small coppers among a crowd of swarthy, half naked children, scrambling, laughing, shouting, tumbling over one another in their eagerness to capture the coins.

I was no less delighted than surprised to see him. He was a young Russian, Ivan Kasanjew by name, who had lived in the same hotel with me for two winters in Paris. He was a bright, genial fellow, something of a dare-devil, a trifle eccentric, like all true Russians, and sufficiently well off to indulge in his passion for the collection of works of art of every description.

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"Ivan!" I called to him, when I had been watching the fun for a few moments. "Ivan Kasanjew!"

His amazement and delight were equal to my own. Questions were asked; explanations of how, whence, and where soon made. He had been making a short trip through Spain; had stopped at Cordova for a day or two, and was going on to-morrow to Seville. On learning that that was also my destination, it was at once decided to travel together, and on the following morning we were en route for the Andalusian capital.

In my pleasure at meeting Ivan, La Guenca and her prophecy had completely faded from my mind.

One evening, as we sat sipping our after-dinner coffee, about a week after our arrival in Seville, Ivan, who usually planned our evening amusements, said to me:

"I've got something new for to-night, Harris—what you Englishmen would call awfully jolly. There is going to be a gipsy entertainment at Calle de Carbon—singing and dancing, I believe. They say the show is immense, and that some of the girls are bewilderingly handsome."

As he spoke, there came to me as a flash, the memory of my adventure in the train; of the dark, sombre face of the gipsy woman, and her prophecy of our meeting in Seville. I am not superstitious naturally, yet an odd feeling of dread came over me.

"Well?" said Ivan impatiently.

I glanced at his handsome, insouciant face. Should I tell him? The fear of being laughed at kept me silent.

"Do you want very much to go to this show," I stammered lamely.

"Why, are you ill. You look decidedly queer."

"No, not ill, but——"

"But me no 'buts,' Harris. Come along man. What is the matter with you?"

An hour later we were seated in a huge hall, amongst an immense audience, chiefly of the lower classes, with a sprinkling of young swells, drawn there, doubtless, by the clever dancing of the women.

Before us was a roughly constructed stage, on which the gipsy troupe, attired in gorgeous and fantastic costumes, were seated in a large semi-circle. The form of the entertainment was unique. One of the men would start a weird twanging on his guitar, and commence a sort of low, nasal chant, which was taken up, one by one, by the troupe, and then by the whole audience, while they all kept time with their feet and by a quick tapping of the palms of their hands. This noise, now rising, now falling was intended to arouse the highest point of nervous tension and excitement both in the audience and the performers. One after another the gipsies would rise and come forward, and go through some symbolic pantomime of love or hate, joy or sorrow, by dancing and gesture, to the accompaniment of the guitar, in whose principal player I recognised the man who had consigned me to the evil one in the station of Aragues. The lithe, almost snake-like movements of the dancers, the wild music, added to, ever and anon, by the banging of the tambourine or the rattle of castanets, seemed to my prosaic mind like an orgie in a madhouse.

Suddenly there was a lull, followed by the wild cries of "La Guenca! La Guenca!"

She glided from behind a heavy curtain and stood smiling before the audience, acknowledging their rapturous acclamations with regal grace.

A fantastic costume of orange and gold set off her form to perfection. Her bare throat and arms were glittering with golden baubels. She poised one arm above her head, rested her right hand lightly on her hip, and commenced to dance. Such dancing! Now soft, sensuous, undulating; now swaying languorously with half closed eyes; now whirling and bounding lightly and swiftly; now half crouching with flashing eyes, and then springing forward again, laughing radiantly. It was diabolical. A sudden grasp of my arm recalled me to myself. Ivan was breathless with excitement. His fair face was flushed with crimson.

"She is wonderful!" he gasped. "She is divine!"

"Say devilish, rather," I muttered.

He did not even hear me. He was watching again, with his whole soul in his eager blue eyes. When the performance was over, I could hardly drag him away.

"I must see her again," he kept repeating. "If I could only meet her, only speak to her!"

His wish was soon granted. As we passed out we saw her about to enter a neighbouring restaurant. She recognised me at once and came towards us.

"Welcome to Seville!" she exclaimed, holding out her brown, slender hand, and then added, a little maliciously, "I see that you have brought your friend."

Kasanjew looked bewildered.

"Why, Harris," he broke forth at last, "why didn't you tell me you knew the señorita?"

There was a world of reproach in his voice.

I did not know whether to laugh or to be angry. The *danseuse* relieved me from my embarrassment.

"Will not the gentleman join us?" she said invitingly.

Ivan accepted eagerly. I could only follow his example. We found the rest of the company already seated.

"If the cabaleros will deign to take supper with us," she said with a charming smile. "This is Pepe," introducing with a graceful gesture the dark-browed guitar player, who scowled at us fiercely. "And that is Juan, and there is Palma, and the *nina* (girl) is our Pepita."

The supper was a joyous one. All, with the exception of Pepe, relaxed under the quantities of wine which Ivan insisted on ordering. My friend was radiantly happy. But it was the smile of La Guenca, not the wine, that mounted to his head. Whether her capricious fancy had been caught by his blonde beauty or whether she was enticing him for some purpose of her own, I could not decide. If I was doubtful of her feelings, Pepe was more easily read. He frowned darkly, ate little, drank nothing, and when Ivan insisted on filling his glass, he struck it as though accidentally with his arm, sending it crashing to the floor; the broken glass seemed ominous.

All the way back to our hotel, Ivan simply rhapsodised on the charms of his new acquaintance. She had told him that her name was Gabriella, and boasted that she had Royal Moorish blood in her veins. He insisted on hearing the story of our meeting in all its details. Unconsciously I grew very earnest as I spoke of the warning which I had received.

"What nonsense, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed, laughing. "The only thing worth consideration in the matter is Pepe. He seems to be an ugly customer. But," he added, drawing a silver mounted revolver from the inner pocket of his coat, "if he proves troublesome, I have a plaything here which will perhaps influence him."

In vain I protested, entreated, warned. I doubt if ever he heard half of what I said, so lost was he in his rapturous dream.

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"If Gabriella is the woman I take her to be, I will marry her," he concluded in his reckless, impetuous fashion, as he bade me good night. I knew how utterly useless it was to battle against any determination, however eccentric and capricious, in one of his nationality, one might as well try to break a block of granite as a Russian's will. I could only hope that his caprice would wear out with time.

From now on Ivan spent almost all his time among the gipsies. La Guenca seemed to have bewitched him. When away from her he was restless, irritable, and abstracted, taking no apparent interest in anything. He also spent a great deal of his money for very handsome presents. I pitied the fellow sincerely. He had fallen a victim to the diabolical fascinations of a woman without heart or conscience. One evening, wishing to see for myself how far things had gone between them, I proposed that I should accompany him.

The performance was the same as before. Afterwards we all assembled again in a restaurant. I was puzzled at first at the change in Pepe. He greeted us, if not graciously, at least with an outward show of civility. I soon understood. After supper he suggested a little game. My friend acquiesced at once. Ivan lost continuously. Watching the gipsy keenly, I discovered that he was playing with false cards.

When I was alone with Ivan, I had a long, earnest talk with him on the subject, and told him what I had seen.

"I knew it," he replied wearily. "But I am willing to lose a little money to keep him in good humour, and prevent him continually spying on Gabriella and myself."

"Did it never occur to you," I responded, "that she might be his accomplice?"

He sprang to his feet, livid with rage.

"How dare you!" he cried hoarsely.

For a moment I thought that he was going to strike me. I met his angry glance sadly but unflinchingly. His clenched hand dropped slowly to his side.

"Harris," he said, in a voice quivering with emotion, "you misjudge her on account of her surroundings. If you could only know her as I do! She is the bravest, noblest, truest woman I have ever met."

"Ivan!" I cried desperately, "you are mad! Throw off this spell. Be a man. Come away with me at once to Russia—Paris—anywhere; but come before it is too late. When once you have left this place, time and change will cure you of this folly."

For a moment a look of despair crossed his face.

"It is too late now," he replied, in a tone that permitted of no argument. "I love Gabriella more than my life."

"And she?"

"Harris, I fully believe that she returns my love. In a short time she hopes to be able to escape from her tribe and follow me to my own country. If I do not marry her," he added after a moment's pause, "I shall die!"

The next day I went with the lovers on a boating trip. We were drifting down the Guadalquivir at sundown. Gabriella was at the rudder; Ivan and I worked the oars. As La Guenca was free this evening, we did not think of returning until the silver light of the moon was streaming over the water. I persuaded my friend to let me manage the boat myself, and he, only too glad to be relieved, threw himself at his charmer's feet. They made a handsome picture. He strong and fair and radiant as a young sun-god, she dark, dreamy, mystical as fate.

"How beautiful is love," he murmured.

She stooped and pressed her lips passionately to his forehead.

"My beloved!"

We were slowly gliding past the golden tower which once held the treasures of the New World. At that moment a voice broke forth on the stillness of the night—low, thrilling, despairing like a warning of death. It was the lament of the fall of Granada.

"I am cold," murmured the gipsy, wrapping her shawl closer around her, as the last despairing notes died away on the evening air.

We, too, had been chilled by the song. We had all recognised the voice of Pepe, although no one spoke of it. Little more was said until we reached the landing. A false note had sounded in our gamut of pleasure. The harmony of our enjoyment had been disturbed.

A few days afterwards an important telegram called me to Paris. I parted from Ivan with a heavy heart. I could not conquer the feeling that our hands clasped for the last time. I think that he felt it also, for his blue eyes were clouded with a mist that looked like tears when the last moment came.

Six weeks later I read among the foreign news in a Paris paper the following:

SEVILLE, Sept 15th.—For some time past a troupe of gipsy dancers have been drawing large audiences to their entertainments in the Calle de Carbon of this city. The prima donna of the troupe is the famous Guenca, a woman of extraordinary beauty, but possessed of all the unscrupulousness of her tribe, and whose charms have ruined numbers of our young noblemen, who, blinded by her fascinations, have squandered large sums of money on her while her companions plundered them ruthlessly at cards.

The latest victim was a wealthy Russian, Ivan Kasanjew, whose reckless passion for her has been a matter of much comment. Yesterday morning his dead body, stabbed in five places, was found lying in the Alameda de Capuchinos.

A short, pointed dagger, such as is customarily carried by gipsies, was found near the corpse, covered with blood. The murderer is supposed to be one Pepe Aranjo, a member of the same troupe and the lover of the prima ballerina. The motive of the crime is presumed to have been jealousy.

Pepe Aranjo and La Guenca have disappeared together. It is said that they embarked on a French steamer for Lisbon. The authorities are on their track, but it is possible that they have made good their escape from the country before they can be overtaken.

This was the tragic ending of Ivan Kasanjew's mad infatuation.

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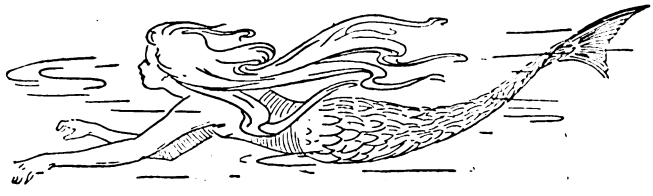

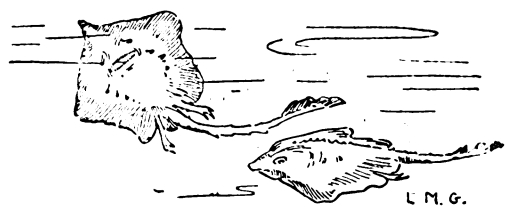

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Unearthed and Re-edited By Robert Machray.

Illustrated By Arthur Jules Goodman.

No. II.—THE FIRST BLACK FRIDAY.

Being a letter of one Mungo Murray, addressed to his grandson, Sir Oliver, of the City of London, banker, printed for the first time.

"My Dear Noll,

"You have frequently asked me to write down the story of that eventful day called Black Friday, and all that pertains to myself and to our family in connection therewith. Methinks it were best to comply with your request, and to set forth in writing a sort of history of the events of the '45 so far as they concern our own fortunes.

"My father, who was your great granddad, was of the well-known Highland house of Murray, and a man of some estate. I remember him not, for he died when I was a mere child, having succumbed to wounds which he had received fighting for King James — him whom the Whigs called the Pretender.

"Now that all these troublous times are past, and it is certain that no Stewart will ever again sit upon the throne, you will not be able to understand how it was that men such as he were well content to lose not only their property, but their lives as well, for that dearest of lost causes.

"Yet so it was.

"Even my mother, deprived of her husband by death, and of his estate by the Government of King George, never said one word in despite of the fallen dynasty, devotion to which had wrought her bitter woe.

"Then, when I was a little boy, she settled in the old grey city of Aberdeen, and, being in possession of some money of her own, was minded to make me a member of its famous Faculty of Advocates. But she died when I was a lad, and bade me choose whatever profession or calling I had a taste for.

"Now when I thought the matter over, I was ill content to stay in North Scotland—which, were it as rich as it is beautiful, would be the wealthiest country in the world. Being somewhat puffed up with the vanity and spirit of youth, nothing would suffice me but that I must come to London.

"Here, in the richest city on earth, I soon found that there were many persons who had no other occupation than the making of money, and that, not from the profits made in the trading in merchandise, but from their success in a game in which Chance played some part, but Wit more. I mean the buying and selling of stocks and shares of the debt of the nation, and of the Bank of England, and the like.

"Among the most prosperous of those who had dealings constantly on 'Change was Isaac Elnathan, the great Hebrew banker, who was, of course, no other than your grandmother's father. To his safe keeping I intrusted the money I had brought with me from Aberdeen, and after a time was lucky enough to be taken into his office. As the years went by, he gave me not a little of his confidence—the which I strove hard to gain ever more fully, and that for a reason which will presently appear.

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"I lived in his house, as was then the fashion, and there I met Leah, his daughter. Your mother, dear Noll, was lovely to look upon, for she was like my Leah, who bore her; but, lad, lad, never was any woman so sweet and winsome and bonnie as your grandmother. God gives me sometimes to see her in my dreams, and then the longest day is short with happiness.

"I loved her, and she me.

"How simple it seems when 'tis said!

"Yet never was anything less likely than that we would ever be married. It was for that object that I toiled and slaved for Elnathan, giving years of service with all the strength of my mind and body—somewhat after the fashion of a patriarch who loved the sister of another Leah.

"'Twas presumption, indeed. The daughter of a king of finance, a monarch of money, and I no more than that great man's clerk, for I was no more than that then. But I hoped. She was much younger than I, and her father had promised her to nobody, but——. Then I would grow cold at heart with fear of some possible rival, to whom Elnathan might wish to betroth her.

"Elnathan would not have been the sharp and wonderful man he was, if he had not seen something of our affection for each other, but he made no sign of noticing what was going on under his eyes. So time sped along, and quickly enough, for had not each day its own excitements, surprises, and ups and downs in the ever varied conflicts of which 'Change Alley was the field.

"Now that is a business, Noll, in which one hath always to beware of the bolt from the blue sky.

"With the suddenness of a hurricane there fell upon the kingdom, and more especially on London, which is its very heart, the tidings that Prince Charles Stuart, the son of that James for whom my father had lost lands and life, had landed in Scotland. Then we heard that he had succeeded in raising an army among the clans of the Highlands, and was to make a bold try to regain for the Stuarts the throne of their fathers.

"As to the way the tidings affected us, we were not long in finding out. One day Elnathan sent for me—this was towards the middle of 1745. When I entered his room, he had a dark scowl upon his face, and when he spoke it was with a sneer.

"'See, here,' said he, and he tossed over a letter to me. 'What think you of that, now?'

"The letter proved to be from one of our customers, a gentleman of the town, who had the sum of £20,000 at deposit with us. He requested that the money should be repaid him at once, alleging that now the young Pretender was in the country everything was in danger, and that the only safe place for money was some secure and secret hidingplace in the ground—'where,' wrote he, 'I shall soon follow it in all probability, for I am so overwrought with fear in my mind, and so overset in body by reason of a fearful cold in my head and in my bones, that I fear me I have not long to live.'

"He concluded his letter by asking that the money should be sent him as speedily as possible, if we would not be the death of him, in notes of the bank of the value of £1000 apiece.

"'That is only the beginning of troubles,' said Elnathan. 'However great or small the hubbub which the Prince shall make, it will be sufficient to disturb the market, and money will be called in on every hand, and stowed away, for fear of what may happen. What say you?'

"'Tis but what is to be expected,' I replied. 'Yet will it work both ways, for there will be the flow as well as the ebb of the tide.'

"'Aye, there will be some golden opportunities,' quoth Elnathan, while his face lighted up. 'Now, Mungo, you will get from the bank twenty-one notes of £1000 each, that's one extra for interest, and 'twill fix in his mind how much better it is to have his money with me earning something for him, than to have it buried and hid away.'

"I turned to do his bidding.

"'Stay!' cried he, with a burst of hearty laughter, 'go, fetch me also a bottle of hartshorn.'

"'A bottle of hartshorn?' cried I, in amaze.

"'Aye, even so, the bank notes are a plaster for his poor mind, and the hartshorn is for the cure of that terrible cold of which he maketh pretence. For 'tis naught sure but a pretence that cold of his.'

"Much was I tickled with the humour of the thing, nor could I fail to see that there was a certain cunning diplomacy in the action of Elnathan. For it was plain that a small matter such as £20,000 disturbed him so little that he was even able to make a jest of its return.

"So out I went, and got the notes from the Bank of England, and the hartshorn from the apothecary. And I wrapped the notes round the bottle, and so made a parcel, which I dispatched to our customer by a trusty messenger.

"I tell you this, as it gives a specimen of what was going on at that time, and also exhibits how true a knowledge of human nature your ancestor possessed, for the parcel came back to us two or three days afterwards, minus the hartshorn, and plus an apology.

"Now, my master could see nothing very terrible in the rising of the Scottish clansmen—'savages,' he called them in my presence, just by way, I fancy, of indulging a grim sort of pleasantry, of which his Highland clerk, myself, to wit, was the butt.

"'Twill come to nought,' said he. 'When the regular troops of the army come upon these savages, they will scatter them as the wind does chaff.' Even when it was known that Johnny Cope had been very thoroughly thrashed at Prestonpans by the said savages, Elnathan still held to his own way of thinking.

"'Twon't last,' said he.

"There was a kindly twinkle in his eye as he continued: 'Now, Mungo, which is it to be with you?

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Are you to continue to serve me, or are you going to turn your back on London, and become one of the young Prince's men?'

"I had told him something of my family history, and was therefore not unprepared for these questions of his. But, as far as I was concerned, I had no occasion to halt in mine answer. Had there been no Leah, it might, perhaps, have been different.

"'Surely, sir,' said I, 'you must know that your interests are next my heart. So long as you are satisfied with my efforts, I can have no wish to forsake your service.'

"But when Prince Charlie, after making himself master of the whole of Scotland, began his march into England, and had taken Carlisle, an event which fell out on the eighteenth of November, Elnathan's tune changed somewhat. Next we heard that the Prince was coming southward with his Highlanders in fine style, enlisting hundreds of recruits under his standard, and winning the hearts of men and women in Lancashire by his gay and courteous manners.

"Marching with great swiftness, the Prince and his clansmen reached Manchester on the twenty-seventh. This was news indeed, look upon it in any way that one cared to.

"Truly was it an evil time in 'Change Alley. Men of the highest standing, both as regards their integrity and their ability, looked at each other askance, wondering in their souls what was next to take place, and how far trust might be given. There was but little confidence either in each other or in the Government, and, therefore, it was that although there were but few transactions in the Funds, or, for the matter of that, in anything else, all securities began to sink in value, as people became more and more frightened.

"Elnathan, however, was not amongst those who took fright. He was amazed and disappointed at the success of the young Pretender, but stoutly maintained that there could be no doubt as to what the end would be. Even when everything seemed black enough, he still kept to this faith of his, albeit he could not but be influenced by the untoward state of the times.

"Now it is no longer a matter of report or rumour, but hath passed into the cold domain of history—all that happened to the Prince. Therefore proceed I to relate what befel me, and the house of Elnathan, in connection therewith.

"First of all, then—and it is a mysterious thing how works the strange hand of fate—the principal general, and by far the best soldier in Prince Charles's army, was no other than Lord George Murray, who was my father's cousin, as, of course, Noll, you know well. I had frequently pondered over Elnathan's remark about the 'golden opportunities,' and, as the news of the Prince's advance was confirmed, and appeared more and more terrifying, the idea came to me that in this relationship I might find just such a golden opportunity as my master had referred to.

"So, taking my courage in my hands, I made bold to submit a proposition to Elnathan. It was that I should journey northwards, join the Prince's army, make myself known to the general, my kinsman, and thus be in a position to be acquainted with their plans and movements. Two armies of the King were now in the field, not far from the Jacobite host, and it was on the cards that something decisive would occur ere long.

"If that were the case, and it all seemed very probable, I would be in an advantageous position for ascertaining the best or the worst, and would do my utmost endeavour to come with the information to London, so that Elnathan would know exactly how to act with respect to the market in 'Change Alley.

"Elnathan listened to what I had to say.

"'"'Tis well thought of,' said he. 'But have you considered that you are taking your life in your hands? There will be perils by the way, perhaps; there will be greater dangers to be encountered when you attach yourself to the Prince's troops, and who can say what may befal? 'Tis far safer here in London. Better think it over again, Mungo. And yet—you may do so great a stroke of business as to make the risk seem a trifle in comparison.'

"'"'Tis not,' said I, 'that I hold my life cheap, but there is that in my heart which urges me to attempt some great thing—a thing so great, indeed, that you will no longer regard me as your clerk, but as one who hath done you so vast a service that you will consider him rather in the light of an equal.'

"Elnathan glanced at me keenly, and yet not unkindly.

"'"Mungo,' said he, 'have I the name of a just man or not? You, who know most of my affairs, can best answer.'

"'There is that in my heart which urges me to attempt some great thing.'"

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"I bowed my head. There was no juster man in all London than Elnathan, the Jew.

"'I take your meaning, Mungo, plain enough. 'Tis a partnership that is to be the reward of your success. Without more words, I agree. But what if you fail?'

"'Why, then,' said I, 'I will be no better and no worse than I am now.'

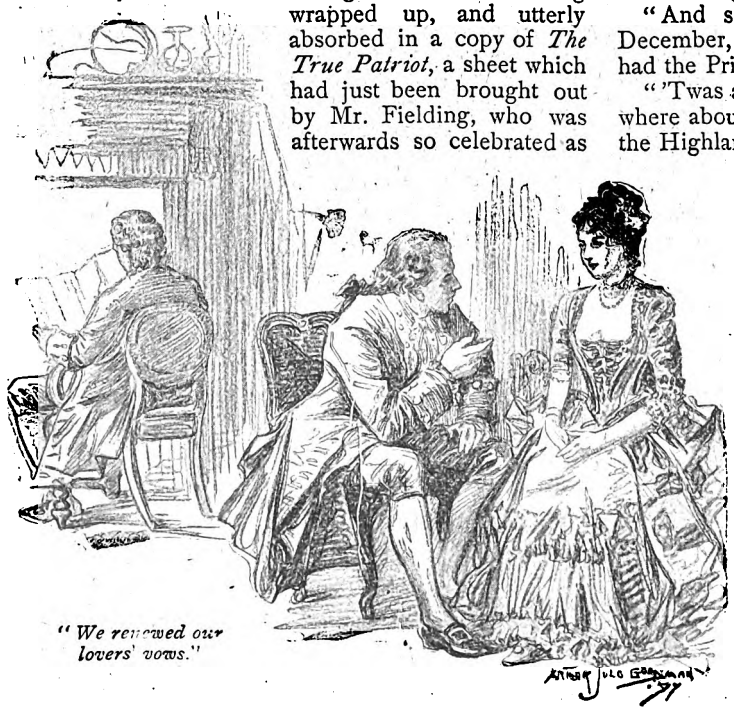
"'Surely better,' said he, with unusual gentleness. 'Tis not likely that any man would overlook and pass by the attempt even to do anything of this kind. Win or lose, I am not the one to forget it.' Then, with an abrupt change of manner, he went on: 'If you are resolved, I shall do this, as I think it may help us in the event of your success, and will not hurt us much should you fail.' To take advantage of such an opening in the market as you may be the means of making, it is necessary to have the command of a large amount of ready money. That I will get immediately.'

"I bowed again.

"'When do you start?' he asked, to which I replied that I would make ready at once, and depart with all possible speed. Thereupon he gave me letters to persons of importance at Dunstable, Northampton, and Leicester, who would be willing to be of any assistance I might need upon the way. Then he bade me not to stint myself as regards money, but to take what would furnish me forth handsomely.

"'Tis a time to spend,' quoth he.

"That evening, after supper, as I sat at a table exchanging glances and sometimes a sentence or two with Leah, Elnathan made a great show of being wrapped up, and utterly absorbed in a copy of *The True Patriot*, a sheet which had just been brought out by Mr. Fielding, who was afterwards so celebrated as the author of 'Tom Jones,' and which was devoted to the Whig interest.



"We renewed our lovers' vows."

"Seeing him occupied thus mightily with his paper, we drew our chairs together, and renewed our lovers' vows with many a fond and, perhaps, foolish word. I told her of the enterprise on which I was about to set out, and was greatly encouraged by her confidence that I would succeed,—as is the way of a loving woman.

"Next morning I was on horse early, fully armed, and, without more ado, rode out of town, making for St. Albans, and thence, by way of Dunstable, to Northampton, where I expected to hear of the whereabouts of Prince Charles and his Highland host.

"But when I arrived at Northampton, having made the journey in two days, the weather being favourable, by dint of hard riding, I could hear nothing with definiteness of the place where the Prince and his army were encamped.

"Procuring a fresh horse from the friend of Elnathan residing in that town, to whom he had given me a letter, I pushed on for Leicester. This place I discovered to be ablaze with rumours, but no certainties, and I was in some doubt as to what point I should next ride to. And here again Elnathan's correspondent was of service.

"For he had been informed that there was a small company of gentlemen, Jacobites, who were proceeding next day to join Prince Charles. Thinking that they might have more than an inkling of where he was, I offered to be of their party, which they readily agreed to when they knew that I was a kinsman of Lord George Murray.

"And so it came about that, on the fourth of December, we reached Derby, where the selfsame day had the Prince also arrived.

"'Twas a strange scene that met my eyes. Everywhere about the town were to be seen the tartans of the Highlanders, and my heart warmed towards them. The men were in high spirits, because they understood that they were to march upon London almost immediately. Inquiring of an officer for the head-quarters of Lord George, we were told that he was with His Highness at a house belonging to the Earl of Exeter, situated at the bottom of Full Street.

"It was now dark, and torches flamed along the street and in front of Lord Exeter's house, when, having made known my name and my business to the captain of the guard. I was shown into a waiting-room, where there were already many others. I was told that the Prince and Lord George and the other leaders were met in council, and that there was no saying how long a time might elapse before it would be over.

"Having found myself a seat in a corner, presently I was so overcome by the fatigue of my journey that

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I dropped asleep, notwithstanding the buzz of conversation all about me. How long I slept I do not know, but at length I was awoke by the sound of two voices, which came to me at first as if they had been heard in a dream, and then more sharply as I gathered up my wakening senses. The room was dimly lit, but not to such a degree that I could not perceive the faces and forms of the speakers.

"I learnt afterwards that they were the Prince himself and my kinsman, Lord George Murray. Seeing that I was awake, the younger of the two, who was the Prince, came over to me, and asked who I was. Thus it was that I not only saw, but also spoke with bonnie Prince Charlie.

"When I told him that I was of the Murrays, being a cousin of his principal general, the other came forward and made himself known. Then they questioned me about London, inquiring what help the Prince might look for there—to which I was not able to give any hopeful response.

"'Did I not tell your Highness,' exclaimed Lord George, 'that this was the case? The English are strangely backward in your cause. 'Twere not well to advance further, for we be too small an army.'

"'Then will I to London alone, rather than go back,' cried the Prince, and left the chamber suddenly in a temper.

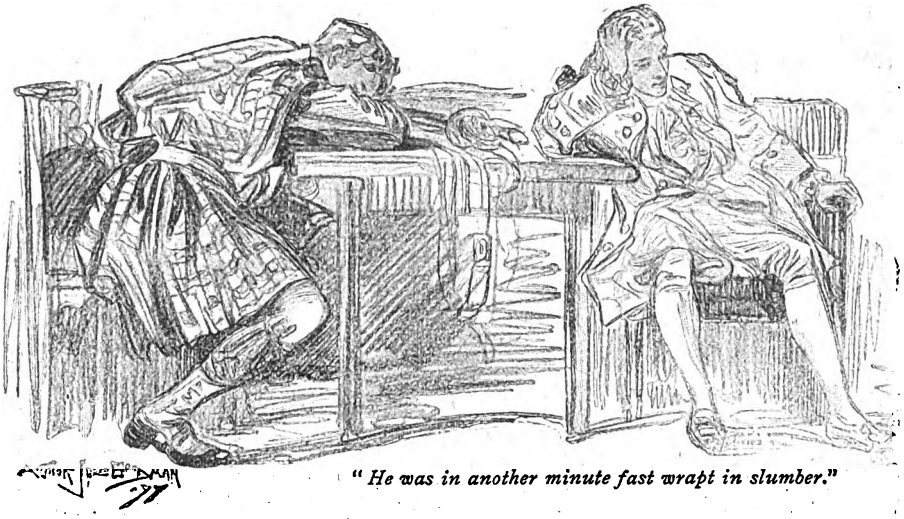
"''Tis a noble spirit, brave, courageous, kingly, but headstrong,' said Lord George. 'Those of us who are older in war must count the cost, for he will not. The odds are too great. Five thousand clansmen, though they be as the whelps of lions, how can they prevail against thirty thousand, most of whom are trained and hardened troops?'

"His gallant figure seemed to shrink with weariness, and the weight of their evil fortune, and I saw two great tears of a sudden in those brave eyes of his. Then he clutched his sword, threw it upon the table, where it fell with a crash, and swore by the Splendour of God that there were but two courses open to them. One was to go on to London, as the Prince wished—that would be to die with him. The other was to go back to Scotland, where there was some chance of making a stand—that, at the worst, would be to die for him.

"'Back to Scotland! Back to Scotland! 'tis our only hope,' cried he.

"Then he asked me about the fortunes of myself, and also told me that there was to be a council of war next morning to decide which course was to be followed, but that he and the other generals were determined on a retreat. Asking me where I was to sleep that night, I replied that I would stay where I was, seeing it was late, and I knew not the town.

"'Tis where I shall stay myself,' said he, and forthwith leaning his head upon a table, he was in another minute fast wrapt in slumber, as is the way of the veteran of war.



"He was in another minute fast wrapt in slumber."

"Here then was news indeed, and I saw at once how valuable to me was the information I had received. I knew that the people of London, when they heard how far the Stuart army had penetrated into the country—within a few days' easy march of the capital, would be sorely dismayed, and that the market of 'Change Alley would be in a fine flurry. They would know that the Prince was at Derby at least two days before they could hear of his retreat northwards.

"'Was this my opportunity?' I anxiously asked myself.

"Lord George was awake before daylight, and, rousing me none too gently with a shake—for I had fallen asleep again—said: 'Get thee back to London, Mungo. You may be of great use to us there. For myself, I am resolved upon the retreat of the army. Anything else is madness!'

"Then I asked him if it would not be better to wait till the issue of the council of war was announced. He replied that I should go at once, as the meeting of the council could have but the one result. Calling for an attendant, he bade him bring one of his own horses for my use. In another hour I had left Derby behind, and was well on my way to Leicester. That night I was in Northampton. On the morning of the day afterwards, that is, on Friday morning, I was in London, more dead than alive.

"Oh, that wild ride, in which fear and hope chased me on, and yet above them both I experienced a feeling of exaltation, the source of which was my love for Leah. For the success of my ride would be *our* opportunity also.

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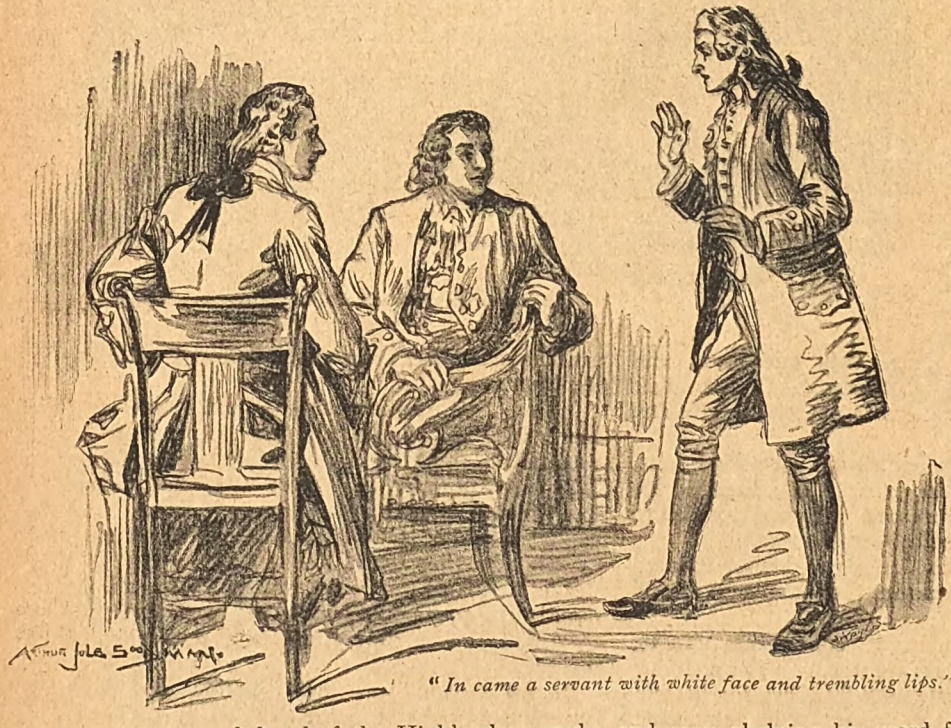
"A sorry sight was I, mud-bespattered, grimy, and dishevelled, as I drew up before Elnathan's door, but little did I think of that. The clatter of my horse's hoofs and my own shouts roused my master, and in another minute we were closeted together.

"Never had I seen Elnathan so agitated, whether it was because he was glad to see me again, or because of the terrible news that was shaking the town. While I had some refreshments he told me that messengers had reached London the night before, saying that Prince Charles was in Derby, that the road was open to London before him, and that he would reach the town in another week. There had fallen on every-



"In came a servant with white face and trembling lips."

one a great terror and dread of the Highlanders, and there was like to be such a panic as never was seen in 'Change Alley before.

"Could anything have happened more seasonably for my special information to have its full effect? So I felt, as I narrated to Elnathan what had befallen me, and how that even now the dreaded Highland host was in full retreat for Scotland. Now, he was a wonderful man, that great grandfather of thine. In an instant he became calm, impassive, purposeful, with his plan mapped out. 'Twas just as if he had been a general, aye, a conqueror, tasting the certainty of victory before ever the battle was fought.

"While we were together, in came a servant with white face and trembling lips.

"'The Bank—the Bank!' he cried. 'Tis beset on all sides by a vast crowd, all clamouring for their money.'

"'A run on the Bank,' said Elnathan. 'Doth not fortune serve us well? We shall be able to buy the Funds at the price of a song this day.'

"Then he rushed away to 'Change Alley, to take command of his forces on that field of battle, bidding me to come also when I had rested somewhat. After a couple of hours, thither I went.

"In the Alley, and in the streets round about it, there were hundreds, nay, thousands, of men, and women also, stark mad with terror; they cried, they wept, they fought, they cursed, they shouted like demons, for rage and fear had changed them into yelling fiends. Talk of Highland savages! Here were savages enough and to spare, though many of them were the greatest merchants in London.

"Then came a rumour that the Bank of England had closed its doors, and the Funds went down to 50—some said to 49. Then 'twas reported the Bank was still open, but cashing its notes in sixpences, which, of course, was a pardonable ruse to gain time.

"Elnathan, almost alone in that frantic mob, kept composed, although his air was gloomy, as if he, too, felt how serious was the state of things. Buying, buying, buying, stood he there all day, putting every farthing he possessed upon this great stake, and even pledging his word for more, while people thought he was clean crazed. The day closed with 'Change Alley in ruins, as it were, with but few exceptions, amongst whom the greatest was the house of Elnathan, the Jew.

"For, by the beginning of the following week, everyone was well aware that Prince Charles, greatly against his will, had been forced by his generals, and particularly by that kinsman of mine, Lord George, to beat a retreat from Derby, and so northwards to Scotland.

"Now the panic passed away, the terror was forgotten, the fear was changed into joy, and the price of the Funds, as a natural consequence, rose quickly. Then Elnathan sold at an enormous profit, realising an immense fortune, and I became his partner, and what was better, his son-in-law.

"Mungo Murray."

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THE WORK OF M. DE PARIS.

THE method of an execution in a foreign land probably few of us know much about. Generally speaking, we know that one country beheads with the sword, another with the guillotine, and that another strangles, but the processes of execution are very little known. The French use the guillotine in executing the death sentence. One hundred years ago it was a thing of life in its ferocity; in these latter decades of peace it does its work unnoted, but none the less with fearful accuracy and expedition. It is worth while to be put face to face with a picture of a French execution. Here is one, translated from the French. It is grim, deadly, realistic. The better to appreciate its details it should be borne in mind that the execution takes place in a square adjoining the prisons of La Roquette for juveniles; that the guillotine is painted red; and that the executioner, M. de Paris, is, from the nature of his business, detested by all.

THE GUILLOTINE.

1 A. M.—The air is cold, the sky grey-black. On the Place de la Roquette, stationed near their stacked arms, the municipal guards stamp their cold feet and talk under their breath. Under the leafless trees officers pace backwards and forwards. Now and then some passing journalist salutes them. It is early, but the adjacent streets are barred. The lights of the street lamps flicker on the helmets of the orderlies who reinforce the black lines of the police. Beyond the guards are night prowlers; men with their collars turned up over their ears, and bareheaded women.

"*Tiens!* There it is for this morning, Chouette!"

"You pay for drinks? Have you a countermark?"

"As for him, poor devil, he won't snuff much of anything, when his nose is in the basket!"

"He, Polyte! He, *là bas*—"

And coarse jests are exchanged.

In the wine shops men and women clamour and push each other. Among them are men of the world in fur-lined topcoats and silk hats. They drink standing at zinc counters cheek by jowl with thieves and cut-throats, whom they watch furtively. The small rooms are packed. The air is stifling. The waiters serve punch and coffee at all the tables. In a corner a woman, seated on a stool holding a child upon her knee, drinks hot wine.

2. A.M.—A policeman puts his head in at the door. "You must close, it is two o'clock."

"Oh, monsieur, just this once—just for to-day!"

"No. There has been no permission given. Close instantly; it is the order. You can open again at five o'clock. *Allons*, hurry up!"

Slowly the order is obeyed. Shutters are unwound, and the crowds pour out upon the pavement. The streets are dark. There are no lights but the flicker of the street lamps throwing lurid gleams into the raw mist.

"B—r—r! I give it up; we'll see nothing if we wait. Come on, Polyte!"

"*Nom d'un chien!* You think to draw me off? You know me better!"

"But we're freezing!"

"So much the better, it kills time!"

Carriages are arriving. Reporters get out of them, and showing their cards to the guards, pass into the inclosure. Then come men, close shaven; actors or singers, who have heard rumours of the execution as they come out of the theatre. They speak with the sergeant-de-ville on guard and bow low, with hats off, as they pass in.

On the Place de la Roquette, everyone talks to his neighbour. The people speak in low voices and stamp their feet on the frozen ground.

3. A.M.—La Petite Roquette, dark up to this moment, is awake. Shadows pass and repass on the lighted windows. "They begin there." A philosopher in the crowd points from Little Roquette to the other prison,

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looking black in the early morning, opposite. "They begin there to finish here!"

A rumbling of wheels comes from the distance, and the crowds peer towards the sound. Two black, heavy waggons roll down the Rue de la Roquette. The horses come at a trot. It is M. de Paris, the executioner, and his aids who bring the instrument of death. The carriages are drawn up in a side street. The crowds stop talking and press towards the black waggons. M. de Paris gets out first. He holds his umbrella in one hand; his silk hat is crushed down to his ears. He steps forward as if against his will. He is bent nearly double. He looks nervously to right and left and casts a frightened glance behind him; and, trembling on his rheumatic legs, he goes up to a policeman and whispers to him. He looks haggard and worried. He never likes to be watched at his work.

The policeman forces back the reporters. "*Allons!* gentlemen, step back a little, I beg of you! You annoy the executioner!"

The aids of the executioner have taken off their overcoats and are laying out the heavy beams of the guillotine on the frozen ground; and M. de Paris sees that his "accessories"—the box of sponges and buckets—are arranged in order on the borders of the walk. This is a line which must not be crowded, and he querulously calls to an orderly. "If anyone dares to cross that line," he whines, nearly whimpering, "I shall complain to the Ministry!"

4 A. M.—The heavy side-beams are standing upright. There has not been one stroke of the hammer! Each piece fits into its fellow. The sinister business is accomplished in the light of lanterns, and the moving lights bring into relief the copper worked into the wood. In the Rue de Merlin pale, curious faces are looking out. They see the lights dancing in the darkness. They have watched for days for these same precursory lights to come, heralding the spectacle. There are murmurs of a crowd of people pouring into the side streets from all directions. Now and then angry voices clamour out the name of the condemned. The soldiers draw in line still closer, and work back the crowd. Inside the cordon of the guard people have stopped walking to and fro. Each one presses nearer the deadly monster rearing its strong frame into the cold night of shadow. Each one plants his feet more firmly, prepared to see everything that there is to be seen by-and-bye, when the moment comes.

5. A.M.—On the summit of the side-beams the capital is set and the pulleys are in order. The magistrates have come. They walk slowly forward into the places reserved for them. They do not speak. Their faces are fixed and solemn. The immense razor is brought out; the aids of the executioner slide it into its groove and pull it into its place with a binding rope. Once—twice it rises and descends. It is heavy enough. A weight of seventy kilograms. It runs up to play its part and drops with a thud. It is perfect!

Someone laughs in the crowd. "We can have music; the instrument is in tune!" In front of the lunette the basket with the sawdust is ready for the bleeding head. M. de Paris throws a last scrutinising look upon his boxes; they are ready; and he goes away and hides himself behind one of the heavy waggons.

6. A.M.—"The Red Maiden" stands up waiting.

There is no more chattering in the crowd, which is increasing at every minute. It is bitterly cold. Now and then someone speaks to his neighbour in an undertone. People begin to think of the condemned for whom the pitiless machine is waiting. "Is he awake? Is he sleeping? Has he heard any of the sounds of preparation?—At what hour is the execution?"

"As usual, at half-past seven, at sunrise!"

People shiver. They begin to count the minutes. There is a slow clattering of horses' hoofs, and the rattling of sabres. The cocked hats of mounted soldiers pass, and people crane their necks to see them. "The gendarmes d'Ivry. The last escort. The escort of the dead!" They range themselves in line behind the guillotine. Mourners come out of the crowd; people push and struggle.

"Keep in your place! No partiality here. Don't push! No one sees any better than you do."

People are worn out and half frozen with waiting in the night. Each one tries to push aside the other—they struggle and exchange insults.

"Gentlemen, this noise is indecent. You will be heard from the prison. If you have any delicacy I beg of you!"

And the noise ceases. There is no more talking. If they speak at all it is as if they were speaking in the chamber of the dying.

7. A.M.—The six magistrates are going into the prison. The almoner of the prison follows them. He moves slowly with bowed head. He is nerving himself for his awful duty. In the grand court they halt. The finger of the great clock points to ten minutes after seven, and the order of the execution fixes the time at 7.30. The awakening of the condemned and the making of his toilet will take twelve minutes. They wait eight minutes in the grand court to adjust all things to the order of execution. The minutes seem like hours.

M. de Paris appears. He passes the magistrates with his dragging step. He salutes them with an unhappy air, and, followed by his aids, he goes into the clerk's office. After a moment the clerk of the prison enters upon his register, in the list of those who have left the prison—"Sortie" (gone out.)

"Delivered into the hands of the executor of capital sentences, in obedience to the instructions of the Procureur-General."

8 A.M.—It is dark yet, but day is breaking. The pale light flushes the east. The director of the prison moves forward.

"Now, gentlemen, if you will—"

The little procession moves forward, preceded by a guard. The locked and padlocked doors grind upon their hinges. There is a corridor; then a bare antechamber. One of the executioner's assistants brings a chair and places it in the centre of the room. In this room the last toilet will be made. Then come sombre offices. Very long they seem. Then the drying rooms. The stone slabs sound under the footfall. "Gentlemen, for mercy's sake! No noise, I beg of you!"

They have come to a cloister looking upon a field surrounded by high walls. There is a portion of the building set back from the front; there are three iron doors. The guard turns a key carefully, noiselessly, in the lock, and they go in. A puff of heated air strikes their faces. Two guards rise up in the room and stand waiting. In a corner of the room a man is sleeping on a camp bed. The little procession halts round the bed. They uncover, as if standing over an open grave when the first clod falls upon the coffin. There is an awful silence, a hesitating in mute anguish. The director gently puts his hand on the shoulder of the sleeper. The sleeping man springs up in his bed, awake, and looks about him with haggard, appealing eyes.

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"Your appeal has been rejected and the President has refused to listen to your prayer. Be brave!"

The condemned man is stunned; his eye wanders. There is an awful pause, and then the almoner draws near and, embracing him, whispers to him: "*Mon enfant*" (my child).

And, while the trembling hands essay to draw on the poor vestments in which, for the last time, he is to appear on earth, the priest continues to whisper to him and to embrace him.

What an unending stretch it seems now to the *salle de toilette* (dressing room). The condemned crosses it, sustained on either side by a guard. The executioner approaches. He puts his hand upon the victim's shoulder and presses him gently into the chair. He takes possession of him. From this moment no earthly power can cheat him of his prey. It is his. He has given his receipt for it.

The shirt collar is cut off, and the feet are bound. The hands are tied behind the back. They tie a handkerchief round his neck, and they go out. He is livid. His steps falter like the steps of a child learning to walk. M. Paris leads the way. The door opens and the blinding light falls in upon them. It is broad day. Framed in the open door, the picture is grand and terrible. There are the gleaming helmets of the guards. There is a metallic clash of arms. The sabres flash. There is a tremendous movement as the sea of heads sways to right and left. A silence. Sharply set against the grey background of La Roquette the two great red arms suspend a razor ready to fall. The people bare their heads. In the leafless branches of the trees the sparrows chatter. From the adjoining streets the crowd, waiting and seeing nothing, growls. The whistle of a locomotive tears the air, and people shiver. It seems like a shrill cry for pity. A horse neighs. The prison clock knells the half hour. The aids of the executioner seize their victim. A cry gurgles through the livid lips: "*Vive! A bas!*"

They throw him upon the plank, and his head presses forward under the binder as his body turns. There is an instant of horrible delay. As usual, M. de Paris is too weak for his task. Then his trembling hand goes out; the button works; the knife falls; a bleeding head rolls in the sawdust in the basket.

Ca y est! (It is finished.)

There is a clash of arms, and the light gleams on the polished steel. The troops wheel and return to their quarters.

In the crowd the people laugh—half scared. Their faces are green from excitement and lack of sleep; they are nervous and impatient.

"Is that all?"

"*Ma foi!* What would you have?"

"My compliments, my neighbour! You are pale."

"Pale yourself! To the devil with you."

"Liar!"

"Brute!"

Women yawn aloud. Some of them take little dancing steps and hum airs from the café-concert.

"C'est ta poire, ta poire, ta poir—e
C'est ta poire, qu'il nous faut."

The crowd babbles.

"Did you see how pale he was?"

"Eh, *oui!* He had an incurable headache!"

"How he threw himself back when he saw the knife!"

"He died pitiably!"

"On the contrary, he died well!"

There is a murmur—the cracking of a whip. Look out, there! It is the dead waggon going away, dragged at a gallop followed by its escort, the gendarmes d'Ivry, in the ugly hats. The almoner follows in his *fiacre*.*

There is an uproar in the crowd. A Cabot from some cafe-concert has dipped his handkerchief in the blood which Deibler's workmen are hurrying to sponge away. The crowd pursues him and hoots after him as he brandishes his bloody trophy.

Beyond the first barrier are people who have passed the entire night waiting, well aware of the fact that they can hope to see nothing—yet waiting still, held there by an inexplicable fascination of man for man when he is about to die, a drawing towards the wretched creature who stands upon the brink of the grave, not knowing it, ignorant of the hour of his death, while the crowd waits for it, knowing the hour to a minute.

Among the worn-out, haggard beings beyond the barrier someone cries out. He has recognised his neighbour—a woman with drawn features.

She was the wife of M., who finished on this very spot two years ago. She never misses an execution. She strains her eyes in an indefinable gaze after the black waggon which moves off in the distance, followed by the gendarmes d'Ivry and the *curé*. She climbs into a *fiacre*, and the crowd chases, howling.

The crowd disperses, and the clerk of the court goes up to the office of the registrar of the Eleventh Ward of Paris and sets down on the record the certificate of death:

"Died this morning, Place de la Roquette, at 7.30."

Ca y est!

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* It is the custom immediately after an execution to carry the dead body under escort through the cemetery in semblance of burial. If the dead has friends, they may demand the body. If unclaimed, custom gives the body to the medical students of Paris. Pranzini, who was guillotined in the autumn of 1887, was phenomenal in physical development. His body was given to the medical students, and a scandal (presumably founded on fact), ran round Paris that souvenir pocket-books had been made from his skin. Owing to this outrage upon public manners it was for some time under discussion whether the medical students should be given the freedom of the bodies of dead criminals.

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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet, and defeats it, but at a cost of all the ships but three, which are shortly afterwards chased and attacked by the Japanese fleet. Affairs now assume a serious aspect in Europe, and the British rout the Germans at New Brandenburg with a loss of 150,000 men. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (they are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison. Ni-ching-tang is Foo-chee's father (although Sin-wan does not know this), and one of the scullions of Yen How's kitchen. John Hardy is cruelly tortured by Sin-wan, acting under Yen How's instructions. Foo-chee and Ah-lin go clandestinely to an eating house. Sin-wan suspects, but cannot track them. He vows to kill Foo-chee.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sin-wan.

The next evening, at about six, John Hardy lay on his back on the bed of his prison.

He was conscious that it was near the hour when Sin-wan would appear.

His feet were so gashed and raw from his run over the glass, that he had not stood since he had been thrown the previous night upon the bed. For two days he had eaten nothing, being sick of his long woe. He was not far from death now.

"How long, O Lord? How long?" This was the burden of his feeble thought.

But he retained an intense interest in the nature of the added pangs which *this* day had in store to bring him.

When the key turned, he sprang upright, though, at the effort, the wounds in his feet broke forth into fresh bleeding.

Sin-wan entered, and at his entrance this time John Hardy's flesh writhed like a twisting serpent from his feet to the roots of his hair.

Fire was the instrument of torture at which he felt the most horror. And Sin-wan had now with him a brazier, which swung from his fingers by a handle.

In the brazier glowed and flashed the living coals of flame.

He had in his hand no other instrument that John could see. But John, by this time, had learnt to know that when the instruments were at first invisible, then, in general, the agony was the most relentless.

And now, at the sight of the flame, feeling himself too hopelessly feeble to pass through any further torture that day, John Hardy, by an impulse, did what he had never done before. He fell upon his knees, and stretched out his clasped hands in an attitude of meek supplication to the Chinaman.

Sin-wan was a man; he had the limbs and bodily structure of the human being. Who could say whether if within him, too, some trace of the divine origin of man might not linger, some throe of love, some sob of pity? In John's eyes, as he knelt, welled a world of mute pleadings.

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But the Chinaman showed no sign of having seen him. He deposited the brazier in a further corner, took some small metal objects from a fold of his robe, dropped them on the floor, and approached the kneeling-form. He proceeded to bind him as before, hands and feet, to the chair. But this time, first of all, he took off John's shirt from the upper part of his body, leaving it to hang downward from the waist.

When this was done, he went back towards the fire, took up two of the six small metal objects, which he had dropped, and put them on the fire to heat.

The six metal objects consisted of four tiny Latin capital-letters in iron. They were the letters: A, S, Y, H,—the initials of Ada Seward and Yen How; there were also a roll of iron wire and a pair of pincers.

It was the intention of Yen How to print the four letters all over the body of John Hardy—on his breast, on his two arms, on his thighs, on his back: two at a time; two each day.

And the letters of the first day, as Yen How had ordained in compliment to his queen, were to be A and S.

But, as usual, Yen How had no idea of inflicting the mere brutal pang of a burn upon his victim; some mental refinement of pain must mix with the scream of the physical nerves.

Sin-wan took one of the two iron letters from the fire with the pincers, and holding it off from him approached John Hardy. The iron emitted a red glow, and seemed to burn into the eye-sight of the staring eyes of the victim.

When his bare chest could feel the radiated heat of the iron, his torturer stood, and held the metal steadily still. And so, for a few minutes he remained; and then returned and replaced the iron in the fire, without having touched John with it.

And now he climbed and stood upon the table, the roll of wire in his hand. The three lanterns hung from the ceiling by three hooks near to open spaces in the boarding of the ceiling, through which the candles were placed in the lanterns. Over one of these hooks Sin-wan threw a length of wire; and over another another length of wire. The three hooks were very near to each other.

With one end of each of the two pieces of wire he made a half-loop; and at once hurried to the fire, snatched up the red hot letter A with the pincers, and hung it upon one of the loops; then the S, and hung it upon the other. Their weight was sufficient to make the wires run through their supporting hooks; and they fell upon the marble floor.

Sin-wan now gathered the other two ends of the pieces of wire, and secured them to a point in the wall, having drawn the two letters some inches from the ground. In his hand he held a piece of bamboo, and with this, standing by the side of the wires, he struck first one of the letters, and then the other gently forward.

The two letters began to swing to and fro through the chamber, with uneven motions, one this way, one that. And right in the line of their movement sat John Hardy.

It depended entirely on the force of the propulsions which Sin-wan imparted to the letters with the bamboo, whether or no they touched the chest of the bound victim.

Sometimes they touched, and left behind them, as they swung back, a whiff of smoke. Sometimes they touched twice in succession, one, or both. Sometimes they were only expected—with shrinking horror, and suspended breath,—and did not touch at all.

It was a monstrous torture—the worst he had yet suffered—this coquetry of pain—these fleeting, incalculable kisses of the hot and dancing letters. For every kiss—a whiff of smoke.

Let us draw a veil over his agonies. His mouth was wide, bawling—his eyes straining from their sockets; and at the tension of every fibre of his soul and body, his hair whitened—his skin grew sore—he lived through centuries—he became an old man.

It was some twenty minutes before the see-saw of the swinging wires ceased. Sin-wan hurriedly left his post, ran toward John, and bound his eyes with a cloth. What happened within the next five minutes John did not know. He strained his ear to detect a sound, though he kept on mechanically bawling in a lower key. But he heard nothing. In reality, Sin-wan was reheating the metals to redness; and his noiselessness had for its motive the fact that he wished to take John by surprise.

When the two bits of metals were of a bright glowing red, he passed one limb of the pincers inside the top of the A, and the other limb inside the upper curve of the S, and, holding them so together, at once trotted eagerly and silently upon John.

An appalling scream broke forth, wondrously like the cry of a cat in the extreme of physical anguish. Sin-wan had suddenly clapped the hot pieces upon the middle of Hardy's chest, and held them there. The metal sank, as into a bed of soft luxury, into the flesh, frizzling forth a steaming smoke and reeking stench.

* * * * *

At the exact moment when John Hardy's spirit fainted, and he lost the sense of pain, Foo-chee and Ah-lin met in one long embrace of love.

Toward this they had been drawn and swept for days, and now the two trembling dewdrops had trembled into one.

It was outside the walls of Pekin, and every single member of Foo-chee's and Ah-lin's company had swarmed back into the town; for the drilling of the drilled was over. And only these two were left.

And Foo-chee said:

"Ah-lin."

And Ah-lin said:

"Foo-chee."

And Foo-chee said:

"I am feeling happy, Ah-lin; for we are here where none can see us, and the moon which is rising there is pleasant to see, though her face is round."

And Ah-lin said:

"Her face is broad in a laugh of joy, Foo-chee! And do you like a woman with a broad face, Foo-chee, or with a long?"

"I like a woman with a long face, Ah-lin," said Foo-chee, "like yours, Ah-lin."

And Ah-lin replied:

"I am not feeling at all unhappy, Foo-chee."

And it was then that the two dewdrops trembled into one in a long embrace.

A really long one: for it began a minute before the closing of the gates of Pekin, and it lasted a minute after it. And had they had any idea of the real state of affairs, they would have felt like two very shattered and dislocated dewdrops indeed.

It was Ah-lin who woke first from her trance, and she woke from it with a start that made her pigtail wriggle, and she whispered an awful pallid word into the ear of Foo-chee, and together they started toward the gates.

They were shut out, they were hopelessly late. Pekin refused them. They must spend the long night without.

Ah-lin had an instinct that this meant death for her beloved, perhaps for herself also.

They stood hand in hand, and the upper corners of their slanting eyes went very high indeed.

Still, a whole night hand in hand with the beloved is not nothing. They walked away with a happiness troubled, but not destroyed.

An hour later Sin-wan and Ni-ching-tang were ransacking a certain area of Pekin, one for his son, the other for Ah-lin and her lover, but separately, unsuspected by each other. As for Sin-wan, his knife was bright and white.

"Oh, where is Foo-chee?" said Ni-ching-tang to himself. "Is my son dead?"

The suspicion grew upon him, it became a certainty. He

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hurried back to the Imperial City, and made inquiries for Sin-wan at the prison. Sin-wan, he was told, had obtained a scroll to pass in and out of the sacred precincts, at any hour of that night that he chose.

Soh! Sin-wan was abroad then, and if Sin-wan was abroad, then it must be that Foo-chee was dead.

Ni ching-tang went from the prison straight to the palace of Yen How, and he descended into the vaults wherein was his sleeping-room, and he held the reeking flame of a saucer-lamp of earthenware over a box, and into the depths of the box he dived. He brought up two blue phials, and a broken joss-stick, one of the phials contained a poison, and the other a non-poisonous drug, and this last he put into his bosom.

Then he re-clasped the box; and at once he fell upon his knees, bowing his body and folded hands up and down, touching the cold plaster with his forehead. And from his lips came groans of prayer. And he burnt incense to the gods.

Then he went up again, and out from the Imperial precincts. He, too, was provided that night with a scroll of permit.

Onwards he went, walking very fast. And as he treaded the intricacies of Pekin, he was engaged in a strange continuous effort of mind; the effort to recall all the English words he had ever known.

Once, long ago, he had served in the kitchen of an English family in Canton, and had then been quite a master of pigeon English. But now he found his vocabulary wondrously small. On he went, cudgelling his brains, through the dark and swarming vastness of the city.

Ni-ching-tang was a great man, if patience alone can make a man great, for he searched all that night for Sin-wan, and did not find him. So was Sin-wan a great man, if patience can make a man great, for he searched all the night for Foo-chee, and did not find him. But towards the break of day, as he sat drinking *samshu* in a den, Sin-wan had an idea. He was a drunkard, and could be inspired by drink; nor was he now sober. His idea was that Ah-lin and Foo-chee were not in the city at all, but without it.

He went back once more to the dwelling of Ah-lin to inquire if she had not yet come home. And then, hearing that she had not, he said:

"Fearing me, they have fled from the city together, and are now at Tungchow. To Tungchow, therefore, I will go. For the edge of my knife has the itch this night, till Foo-chee scratch it for me."

But it happened that while Sin-wan was crying aloud from the street to inquire for Ah-lin, Ni-ching-tang had come to inquire also whether one Ah-lin was there. And as the day was prone to break, Ni-ching-tang, far behind Sin-wan, was cautiously shadowing him toward the city-gate which leads out upon the Tungchow road.

Sin-wan waited there twenty minutes, and when the gates opened, he passed swiftly through under the crowding camels, the gall of malice and yellow jealousy rankling bitterly in his jaundiced soul.

To kill—to hew, and slice, and stab—a ravening hunger for this red breakfast was upon Sin-wan. He had had a comfortless night, a night of dark thought and impulse, and the hot *samshu* was talking hot things to his head.

And surely the gods were on his side—anxious for nothing that morning were they but how to provide a red breakfast for Sin-wan! See how they draw up the curtains of night for him; and now the day has that very-early-morning greyness for which one can find no adjective to express its utter yawniness; and now, *just as it is light enough*, something makes Sin-wan turn his head to the left—and he sees.

But poor Ni-ching-tang is struggling frantically among the mules and camels, which press inwards and outwards through the just-opened gate-way; and he has got jammed there, and the man is nearly mad in his agonised struggle to get free; for Sin-wan has passsed through, and he has lost him.

Foo-chee, together with Ah-lin, was fast asleep, as was also Ah-lin, they sitting with their backs propped against the outer surface of the wall, between two buttresses, not very far from the gates.

Sin-wan walked up to them, smiling, lest one or the other should be awake, and see him; and the knife-handle was in his palm, and the blade up his wide sleeves. And when he was right over them, and saw how they breathed heavily, and how the confidence of old love was in their careless embrace, he drove the knife first into Ah-lin with a loud breath, and she sighed, and died.

Saw how they breathed heavily, and how the confidence of old love was in their careless embrace.

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And then, with loud breaths, he drove it several times into Foo-chee, and he sighed, and died. And then into Ah-lin again, and then into Foo-chee again, he drove his knife.

"Dog's gall," he said, as he turned away, and found himself face to face with Ni-ching-tang.

"What, Sin-wan, is that you?" said Ni-ching-tang—"oh, *I* can see what you have been after. Ho! ho!"

"Those are they I told you of," said Sin-wan. "I have done what I said I would do, Ni-ching-tang."

"So I see, Sin-wan! Well, it is the only way—the only way."

"As for you, you will tell no one, Ni-ching-tang?"

"Poh! not I. For why should I? I who have known you these eight months, and the two dead not at all. Poh! see how they lie—still embraced. Are you sure they are well dead, Sin-wan?"

"Oh, well dead."

"They should be. The man—he has one, two, three, four, five stabs—yes, five—ugly wounds, too. The knife went deep each time. What was his name—Foo-chee? Ah, well, no more Foo-chee now—no more Foo-chee."

"Let us be going, Ni-ching-tang. For watching dead dogs is not pleasant to the corners of the eye-balls."

"But *I* feel pleasure while looking upon them, Sin-wan; and the middle of the eye is not offended by the sight of them sitting together—young things, too. But you leer obliquely upon them, Sin-wan, having slain them, through the corners of your eye-balls, and so receive disagreeable feelings from their sight."

"Still, let us be going—let us be moving away, Ni-ching-tang."

"Well, as you wish it, Sin-wan, let us be moving. But they look very well together, Foo-chee and Ah-lin—Foo-chee, with his five gashed wounds and her arm behind his neck. A young man, too, he seems to me—a seller of incense-sticks, I think you said. No more incense-sticks now for Foo-chee—and no more Foo-chee now at all, Sin-wan. Well, well—well, well. It was Foo-chee and Ah-lin: and now it is no Ah-lin any more, and no Foo-chee at all. Five stabs, too, and ugly wounds all. One would have done the work, but he got *five*, well home. Oh, they are well dead, Sin-wan!—have no fear. But Foo-chee has no brother, I hope, no brother to avenge his death, Sin-wan?"

"I care not."

"With horrid torture, Sin-wan?"

"Poh! he was a brotherless dog."

"Well, if that is so. . . . But your walk is staggering, and your eye wanders. We will have a morning drink together in a drink-place which I know. And then to the day's work. . . ."

They re-entered the gates. A reaction had come now upon Sin-wan; his nerves were unstrung from their high tension, and the *sam shu* swam stalely in his turgid brain. He followed Ni-ching-tang as a lamb to the slaughter.

Ni-ching-tang led him down into a foul, dark cellar, where drink was placed before them. And into one of the two calabash-cups Ni-ching-tang poured a liquid from a blue phial.

Sin-wan had thrown himself sullenly upon a plank projection near the black earthen floor; and Ni-ching-tang handed him the draught.

CHAPTER XX.

"The Hundred and Eighty."

The draught was non-poisonous; but Sin-wan had hardly drunk half the contents of the cup when he fell back, fast asleep.

And now, when no eye but God's could see him, the malice of a fiend worked and twisted in the face of Ni-ching-tang. He took Sin-wan's knife, and he ran the edge of the blade gently, almost playfully, along Sin-wan's

Then he sallied forth.

throat, and over his face, and round the roots of his pig-tail, revelling in his sense of power, wallowing in that sweet lust of cruelty which brings to the Chinaman the same keen delight which bodily forms of enjoyment bring to the Western.

He ran the knife-edge along Sin-wan's skin; but he had not the least intention of hurting him. The pleasure of self-restraint with which he kept his itching fingers from violence was exquisite.

The Chinese theory of vengeance is not, like the Hebrew, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"; it is, "two eyes for an eye, and thirty-two teeth for a tooth."

Ni-ching-tang could easily have killed Sin-wan, as he slept there; but, had he done so, he would have despised himself as a weak and bungling boor.

For vengeance to be complete and satisfying, the victim must know *who* it is that is taking vengeance upon him, and *why* he is doing it; and the avenger must know that the victim knows.

Under these conditions, the longer the period which the vengeance occupies in its accomplishment, the sweeter the cud of satisfaction which the avenger chews.

Ni-ching-tang intended that, for the murder of his son, Sin-wan should suffer weeks of torture before death. And although it was beyond his power to inflict these tortures with his own hands (as he would have wished), yet he knew that it was easy for him to cause them to be inflicted by hands stronger than his own.

He did not lose much time in the self-indulgence of running the knife-edge over Sin-wan's throat and

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face. Presently, he put down the knife, and he dived his hand into Sin-wan's bosom. From thence he took out Sin-wan's permit to pass in and out of the Imperial gates, and also an Imperial mandate authorising the Keeper of the Prison Keys to deliver a certain key to Sin-wan.

With these two rolls of paper in his own bosom, Ni-ching-tang ascended the narrow earthen steps, and at the entrance above met the keeper of the drink place yawning his eyes into invisibility against the door. Ni-ching-tang told him that a man, holding position in the Imperial precincts, was asleep below, and did not wish to be roused.

"Let him sleep: he will wake himself," said Ni-ching-tang.

Then he sallied forth. He twisted at a steady trot among a number of alleys, and stopped at a gaudy bamboo-umbrella booth, where an early-morning merchant was lounging desolately. Ni-ching-tang spoke some hurried words low in the merchant's ear, and the merchant nodded, listening; then disappeared down a court; and in three minutes returned, leading a mule by a rope.

Ni-ching-tang scrambled on to the back of the mule; tossed his hand in token of thanks; drove his heels into the outstanding ribs of the mule, and went galloping away.

He traversed in this way two lengths of intervening street, and, still galloping, passed through the city gate which he had lately entered with Sin-wan. He turned the mule's head eastward toward Tungchow.

Tungchow, as we have said, is a small village about four, or possibly five, miles from Pekin. It is, as it were, the "port" of Pekin, for it stands on the Peiho, Pekin itself not being a river-city, as the geography-books wrongly assert.

At Tungchow, Ni-ching-tang had a nephew. And this nephew was the owner of three river boats, two of them fitted with junk-sails, the third a mule-boat, all three traders, down the Peiho with Tientsin, in millet, rice, and rape. In twenty minutes Ni-ching-tang, at the river side, was talking to his nephew from the mule's back. And Ni-ching-tang said:

"Which of the three boats are here, Li-kien?"

And Li-kien replied:

"The mule-boat is here, and also the *Taku*, which lies there where you see."

"The *Taku* has a junk-sail, Li-kién?"

"Yes."

"Then I will buy the *Taku* from you."

"I cannot sell the *Taku*, Ni-ching-tang."

"It is a lie, Li-kien, for you can, and you will. At the waning of the next moon I will pay you for her three hundred *tael*, which is a good reward, in silver pieces. For your cousin, Foo-chee, is dead—and there will be no more Foo-chee any more now at all, Li-kien; for he has been murdered by five stabs, and ugly wounds all. And it is necessary, in order that his slayer should die with horrid tortures, that you sell me your boat, the *Taku*, without much talking. And now you see that you told a lie in saying that you could not, Li-kien."

"It was a lie," admitted Li-kien.

"And the part which *you* shall take in avenging your kinsman," went on Ni-ching-tang, "shall be this, Li-kien. You will put on board the *Taku* rice, and spirit, and water, and fuel, and a rudder-oar, and everything which a man may want for a voyage down the Peiho, and a voyage over the sea, during a week, or more. This you will do. And this also; you will wait here near the *Taku*, all the forenoon if it is to be so, till you see a young man come riding on a mule; he will be wrapped up from head to foot in a great mantle, so that not much of his face and nothing of his head shall be seen. His face shall be yellow like a Chinaman's, but give a keen look into his eyes, and you will see that he is no Chinaman, but an English dog. You will put him on board the *Taku*, Li-kien, and you will hoist the sail for him, for he is without strength, and you will send him on his way alone. And, as you send him on his way, burn an incense, that he may go to his journey's end in safety; for, if he be re-captured, Sin-wan, who slew your cousin, will be tortured, but not killed; but, if he escapes wholly, then Sin-wan will be killed after he has been horribly tortured."

Li-kien pondered, and then objected.

"But one man in the *Taku*, he must needs be cast away, unless he be——"

"He *is* a sailor, Li-kien, and do not fear. And be sure you place in the *Taku* a drawing of China, and instruments such as are used by sea-faring men as the signposts of the ocean. For he can doubtless read such things; and it is necessary for him to arrive at Kiao-chau, where he will meet with his countrymen, and be slain with them when they are slain: but none will know that it is *he*; and Sin-wan will die. The mule you will keep till I send for it."

Immediately the old Chinaman turned the mule's head, and galloped back to Pekin.

All his movements now were characterised with an intense haste, and yet with a certain calm which did not forsake him.

He had much to do, and yet he did not stop to think of anything; he did not forget anything; everything seemed pre-arranged.

Within the prison he was unknown, but he had the Imperial stamp, which opens every door, in the form of Sin-wan's papers.

When he presented himself before John Hardy he had in his hands pigments, costume, and everything ready for the necessary disguise.

At a new face John Hardy started. He anticipated now some new torture, to be carried out by a still more subtle agent than Sin-wan.

As for Ni-ching-tang, he spoke not a word, simply doing his will swiftly on the impotent captive. He painted his face, he dressed him. And all the time he was cudgelling his brains to remember all the English words he needed to tell John Hardy what he was to do.

He found, however, that there was one fact of the situation which all but baulked his plans. John Hardy was weaker than Ni-ching-tang had counted upon. If Hardy's mind was in as feeble a state as his body, it seemed certain that Sin-wan would not die.

He took the dazed captive of Yen How under the arms, supporting him, and half-dragged him forth. And while John Hardy was still wondering to what new experience of pain he was being hurried, he was in the open air. And still Ni-ching-tang spoke no word.

With Ni-ching-tang's own permit, and with Sin-wan's, the two passed beyond the Imperial precincts, Ni-ching-tang lifting after him the lagging steps of Hardy. What was happening to him, John could not dream, but yonder, beyond doubt, was the sky, and there the sailing clouds, and under them a breeze of heaven which went blowing gladly toward the sea.

It was not possible that he was free. He did not believe it. In his profound distrust of Heaven and of earth, he denied it. He was mad again—it was a new torture—the most fiendish of all.

But when he found himself beyond the gates—and there around him spread the wide plain—and there, tethered to a tree drowsed the waiting mule—and there above him was the vast vault, and the free and gadding airs—what could he think? A strange low, whimpering sound—as feeble as can be imagined—as thin as the plaintive whine of a very old and senile man—came from his lips, and two forbidden tears rolled down his cheeks.

He was wrapped in a long robe of soiled silk, which covered the hat of straw on his head and descended to his feet, hiding his rags beneath; and on his feet Ni-ching-tang had put felt slippers. Thus attired he was pushed and manœuvred by the Chinaman to the back of the mule. The rope was put into his hand; and it was then that, for the first time, Ni-ching-tang spoke a word.

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Ni-ching-tang had need of his whole English vocabulary to express now all he had to say. For quite half-an-hour he went on talking, and it was evident that the scheme which he was now putting into execution must have been long meditated; for his instructions to John Hardy how to secure his safe arrival at Kiao-chau were as minute as possible. In his uncouth and tentative English he gave some idea of the formation of the harbour; and he also spoke of the position in which the stranded *Iphigenia* lay, pointing out to Hardy that the cruiser would serve as the chief landmark to warn him when he arrived at his destination. He gave John his own name and that of his nephew. Finally, he handed John a sharp knife with which to commit suicide in case of sudden recapture; and ended up by saying:

"Am got you anything to question me?"

"Am got you anything to question me?"

Yes; John had something to ask. He said:

"Yes—One Question."

And he waited a minute before he asked it.

"I owe nothing to Yen How, do I, for my present freedom?"

He repeated the question thrice, and no sooner had Ni-ching-tang gathered its meaning, than instantly his head went shaking in a series of vigorous "No's."

"No, no, no," he went; "you no goee believe that, mind! You getee catch—getee catch! Yen How catchee you—sharp—killee you!"

Good; all this, then, was not due to any clemency of Yen How's. Even *then*, at that moment of feebleness, when he was still hardly beyond his prison-walls—John Hardy shrunk from hearing that there existed anything good, or human, or redeeming in the Chinese character. He was desperately and clandestinely unwilling to hear it. Some dim and far-off instinct *even then* told him that it would be necessary for him to go on believing this bad race to be *wholly* bad, *wholly* sinful; and that it was in order that he might so believe it, that the Chinese Iron had been ordained to enter into his soul.

But, with a certain reluctance, he ventured upon yet another question. He said:

"And you, sir—what is your motive for setting me free?—Mercy?—Is your only motive a motive of mercy? You want poor Englishman goee free?—Or you havee some other reason?"

Ni-ching-tang smiled at this simplicity of the little foreign devil, when the meaning of the question entered his head. He said:

"Poh! you no troublee head for that. Me havee other reasons. But that nothing for you."

Good again! he owed nothing to them. This man was liberating him for his own private ends.

Ni-ching-tang pointed along a road, and the mule moved. The Chinaman, whose presence in the Imperial precincts was nearly due, stood a little while and looked after the drooping figure on the mule's back. Then he re-entered the city to arrange for the burial of his son.

John occupied two hours in accomplishing the four miles to Tung-chow, and, during this time, thrice fainted from sheer powerlessness.

But on the banks of the Peiho, Li-kien was duly waiting,

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and the *Taku* was in perfect readiness to receive her strange white master. By the time the alarm had spread through the Imperial precincts that, by the carelessness of his gaoler, the white prisoner had escaped, John Hardy was in the middle of Peiho, already some miles below Tung-chow.

In a wondrously short time, as the boat glided down the river he began to lift his head, to observe, to reason, to purpose. How large was the world to him! His wan eye turned whitely upward, and dwelt upon the sky; one great sob thronged in his bosom for exit from his choking throat; his face worked.

The boat was a bluff craft with an erection aft, making her there a kind of house-boat, and with stones laid round a slab of iron, for cooking, for'ard. The junk sail could quite easily be hoisted and adjusted by a single man, and gave to the boat, with a fair wind and stream, a speed of some seven knots. In a land where carts are driven over land by means of wind and sail, as in China, the navigation of the seas and rivers is in a condition far from elementary. John found his craft pliant and ready, and the bulge of the upward-tapering big sail was fine to his eyes. An exhilaration of mood, ecstatic, high, grew upon him. The day was broad and clear, and busy with breezes. On either hand of him spread endless flat-lands, already sprouting with the tender green of barley, rice, and millet. The river was all but deserted.

There was an aspect, not of earth, but of Paradise, in the bright and balmy world. Henceforth—and he knew it—he would have little to do with joy and soft emotion, and the throe of genial feeling; for the gentle heart within him was turned to stone, or something resembling stone. But for the present he was too weak in body and mind to resist the charm of the wide and placid landscape, and the feeling of freedom which it brought. His heart was still not quite a dead thing.

Yet, let us record two facts. Firstly, that John Hardy, from boyhood, had been of an intensely religious nature; that he had always had a somewhat crabbed habit of reading methodically one chapter each morning from the Bible; and that this affectionate soul had overflowed in affection for his Maker also. And secondly, let us state, that on this morning of his deliverance he several times resisted and repelled the impulse which rose in him to give thanks to God. He refused. So much had Yen How changed him. The boy had hardened into something more (or something less) than a man.

Midway between Tungchow and Tientsin, he left the rudder-oar and searched the boat. Li-kien, apparently, had forgotten nothing; there was food and drink in plenty, a pot, a compass of Western make, and a curious instrument, which he assumed to be a contrivance for taking the sun's altitude, but which he could not at once understand.

He made a fire, for which the materials were at hand, put on some rice to boil, and resumed his place at the oar.

Now and again a painted junk passed him, toiling up the river; but he was not even at the pains to hide himself, as Ni-ching-tang had warned him, so sure was he of safety.

At sun-down he glided between the central space, then open, of the bridge of boats across the Peiho at Tientsin. At eleven o'clock, under a calm and radiant night, he had Taku on his starboard beam; and soon he was in the open sea of the Gulf of Pechili.

Feeling drowsy, about fifteen miles from land, he shipped his oar, lowered his sail, and went to sleep.

The point of his destination was Kiao-chau, once German, then very much English.

Here, seven weeks before, one dark midnight, a hundred and eighty English sailors had beached the battered second-class cruiser *Iphigenia*, and landed.

The subsequent adventures of these men, when properly written, would fill volumes. At present we can merely glance at them.

At the moment of landing, the Englishmen were no longer wholly in the dark as to the real state of things in China. The absence of all white men both at Chemulpo and Seoul, of which they knew, if not very suggestive in itself, was *very* suggestive when no explanation could be found of the flagless ships which had chased them, except the one that these ships were Japanese.

Killing the unsuspecting sentries.

The possibility, therefore, that they would be massacred on Chinese territory occurred to them; and their object in coming to Kiao-chau, which was not very remote from the sinking ship, was to throw themselves upon the protection of the Germans, who, as they supposed, occupied the fort of Kiao-chau.

Previous to this, the Germans had very strongly fortified the harbour and its approaches. Its waters were thick with submarine mines, and two strong forts at each of the claws of land which formed the entrance, together with one on the low-lying island of Kinshan in the basin of the harbour, made the position one of considerable strength.

The harbour is about six miles long, and lies N. by W., and S. by E. Around it, in general, is high ground, save at the north-eastern entrance, when an area of sloping meadow-land, rises gradually to the higher levels of the inner *entourage* of the basin. And it was here that the *Iphigenia*, then on the point of sinking, was beached.

Fifty yards away, on the brow of a slope stood the N. E. fort. Though the night was dark, and rain fell heavily, its outlines could be made out.

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The blue-jackets held a sort of informal synod on the sands. There was among them only one staff officer, a lieutenant called Edwards, who, however, was wounded in the breast, and in a kind of daze. Happily, all the special hands were in evidence, except the surgeon, these including the chief engineer, engineer, and assistant engineer, the gunner, the boatswain, the carpenter, with the stokers, and all engine-room hands. Beside these there were about a hundred and fifty blue-jackets.

It was decided to make straight for the N.E. fort, and though no one present could talk German, a volunteer committee of ten, men headed by the chief engineer, a Mr. Murray, set off toward the rising ground.

But these were careless watchman, these Germans! Where was the sentry, and the challenge, and the soldier's stalk, and the rattle of the butt-end? Nowhere was there a light to be seen through all the dripping and desolate night.

The ten men reached the fort to find it as solitary as a desert. They called, and the hills echoed their voice, and through the open portal the night-bird fled and screamed. They passed within the gateway between the two outer bastions, and into the courtyard, and thence onward through every open door. They saw one dead Chinaman sitting in the embrasure of a window, grinning in old decay. But otherwise there was no sign of any struggle. At all events, there were no Germans there. Only the guns remained, and some ammunition and some stores, but not a single small arm.

What to do now? It only remained to visit the S.W. fort, and the fort on the island of Kinshan. And these they found in the same condition.

The Chinese had gained possession of them by killing the unsuspecting sentries in the middle of the night, and seizing, almost bloodlessly, the rest of the garrison, so to speak, as they slept in their beds. The captive soldiers were distributed over China for the celebration of Yen How's Sabbath of Blood; and the forts had then, for the time being, been deserted.

There remained now no further doubt in the minds of the British bluejackets as to their own fate. But they were resolved to sell their lives dearly.

The *Iphigenia* had still a steam pinnace uninjured, and in this they took turns in flying backwards and forwards between the ship and the island all the night, landing everything, in the way of stores, small arms, and ammunition, which might prove useful to them.

The gunner, Shillitoe, counselled the occupation of all the three forts; but Murray and the rest, fearing the result of a division of the little army gave their voice for a concentration of forces upon the island-fort, on account not only of its disconnection with the mainland, but also of the fact that it appeared to be the most powerful.

This plan was somewhat unfortunate, because the island was uncultivated, and furnished no other food than a scanty supply of wild orris and cassava roots, though there were three springs of rather brackish water. Moreover, at about sun-rise, the movements of the pinnace were observed by some peasants on the mainland, and very shortly afterwards there was a considerable commotion to the east and north of the bay. Though the work of the pinnace was not yet half completed, it was seen that no further voyage must be attempted, nor had any effort, as yet been made to spike the guns of the other two forts. At about seven, these two opened fire simultaneously upon the island fort.

At this period China was awake, or at least had opened her early-morning eye-lids; she had tasted blood, and every Chinaman was feeling the thrill of that electrical cob-web spreading over the land, of which the brain of Yen How was the centre. The artillery combat which now commenced between the island-fort and the others was fought not more obstinately on one side than on the other.

But the two outer posts had not been constructed in the main for inward attack, while the inner one had been constructed for outward attack. By noon, the two outer fortresses were in ruins. But the poor *Iphigenia*, also, by which the castaways set much store, had been broken by the wanton Chinese almost into nothingness.

And now commenced a series of strenuous and adventurous days and nights for these one hundred and eighty men—or rather one hundred and seventy-nine, for on the next day Edwards died. They had hardly any food; it was necessary to get it, and to get it in the teeth of the armed Chinese, directed by Japanese. And they got it.

Each night had its own tale of brilliant sortie, or crafty *ruse*, or daring enterprise, or cautiously premeditated plan. One by one their numbers lessened—they became a hundred and seventy—a hundred and sixty. But those who remained went on furnishing materials for a new Odyssey; in two weeks they were the most exquisitely-trained body of men in the world; every day added to them a new supremacy of discipline and culture; eye, and hand, and brain were in it; they could twist through the grass like snakes; could climb like Alpini; could see in the dark; could shoot like machines; could plan in deliberative council like statesmen. In seven weeks they were a living monument of the adaptability to every possible condition of life of the nimble English race.

But this Odyssey lacked Odysseus. It was *Hamlet* without the hero.

To do anything of much greater importance than the procuring of their food, they needed a leader, and a very decent leader indeed was on the way to join them.

(*To be continued.*)

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John Abel, Onecote School, Leek, Staffs. "Cruden's Complete Concordance." 7s. 6d.

H. Pearson, 58 Princess Street, Hurst, Ashton-under-Lyne. *Pearson's Magazine* (Vol. I.). 6s.

Sam Stork, 47 Eldon Street, Sunderland. "Wayfaring Men," by Edna Lyall. 4s. 6d.

A. D. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow. Cassell's "Sunlight and Shade." 5s. 8d.

Mrs. F. Venning, 75 Lady Margaret Road, N.W. "The Christian," by Hall Caine. 4s. 6d.

W. L. Lemon, Uffculme, Devon. "Springhaven." 7s. 6d.

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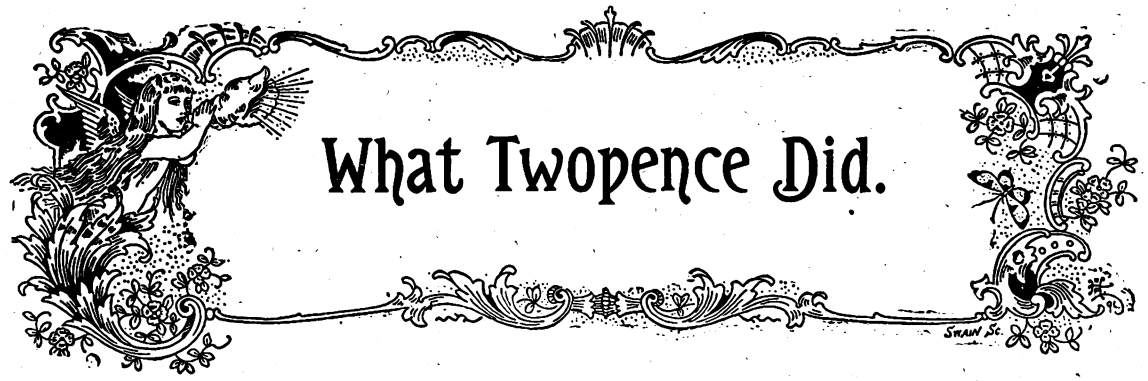

What Twopence Did.

When Mr. Worthington Quish opened his eyes that morning, after an unusually late session at his club, it was to see a noonday sunshine streaming in at his windows, and to hear the little gilded French clock on the cabinet opposite his bed striking twelve musical strokes.

As Mr. Quish had an engagement in town at precisely that hour, his toilet was of necessity hasty, which will account for the fact that he neglected to place in his pockets the money he had taken therefrom the night before.

The discovery that he was absolutely penniless was made five minutes later, when, having entered a 'bus he engaged to pay his fare.

The look of helplessness that overcame his handsome features as he searched in vain for the necessary twopence aroused the sympathy of the only other passenger, who sat opposite him, and by whose ripe beauty he had, on taking his seat, been not a little attracted.

She was more than an ordinarily handsome woman, of fair complexion, and with a figure remarkably well-rounded, the gracefully curved outline of which was enhanced by a close-fitting tailor-made gown of snuff colour.

There was a mischievous twinkle in her great blue eyes, and just the suggestion of a smile about the corners of her full, red-lipped mouth as she observed Mr. Quish's evident embarrassment.

Mr. Quish noted this and it put him in a better humour. There was something friendly in the expression, and he forgave the look of amusement for that reason.

"How annoying!" he said to himself. "I should have enjoyed the ride down with her to look at all the way."

The ride without paying his fare was, however, out of the question; and he reached for the strap in order to stop the 'bus.

As he did so his *vis-à-vis* spoke.

"Pardon me," she said, and her voice was as delicious as her pink-and-white face. "If you will permit it, I shall be glad to lend you your fare!"

Mr. Quish could scarcely believe he heard aright.

"Thank you very much," he replied. "It would be a great service to me. It seems I have forgotten my money, and I have an important appointment in town for which I am already late."

The lady opened the dainty little purse that she carried, and her neatly-gloved fingers extracted the requisite coppers which she passed over to him, and which he in turn passed to the conductor.

"You are very kind," Mr. Quish went on. "If I may be so bold as to ask you for your address, I shall have pleasure in returning the loan."

The lady smiled.

"It is scarcely worth speaking of," she answered.

"And yet," returned Mr. Quish, "twopence, as we have just seen, is of considerable more value sometimes than we have any idea of. I hope you will allow me to repay you. I should not have accepted it had I not looked upon it in the light of a loan merely."

It was now the feminine passenger that was embarrassed. To give her address to an utter stranger did not appear to her quite the correct thing, and yet she could scarcely expect a strange gentleman to accept from her even such a trifle as twopence as a gift.

After a second's mental debate with herself, she handed him a card, upon which was engraved:

Mrs. Edgar Lawrence Mandeville,
West Street,
Hyde Park,
W.

"And may I call, Mrs. Mandeville, and return the loan in person?" Mr. Quish asked emboldened by the knowledge that he had gained a point.

Mrs. Mandeville rose and motioned to the conductor. "If you care to," she replied, and the next moment she had alighted, and the 'bus with Mr. Worthington Quish, its only occupant, was rumbling on down the roadway.

* * * * *

It was a few minutes past five o'clock on the same afternoon that Mr. Quish, his exchequer replenished, mounted the steps of the house indicated on the card, which he had carefully preserved, and rang the bell.

Of the servant who answered the summons he inquired for Mrs. Mandeville, and was ushered into a reception room on the left of the hall. Already the dusk had begun to close in and the apartment, curtained as it was with heavy tapestries, was in something more than semi-gloom.

For ten minutes Mr. Quish sat still and waited. Then the unmistakable *frou-frou* of skirts came to his ears, and the next moment he was on his feet, exclaiming:

"Am I not prompt, my dear Mrs. Mandeville? Here I am, within six hours, prepared to refund every penny of the sum you were good enough to supply me with."

The lady made no reply.

"And I trust," he went on, thrusting his hand into his trousers pocket for the coin, "that my honesty plead

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for me when I ask that with this satisfaction of all your claims against me, our acquaintance, made under such novel circumstances in a 'bus, shall not end. Do you know, my dear Mrs Mandeville, I feel already that I have known you for years, and I am sure that when you know me better, you—"

At this point Mr. Quish came to a sudden halt.

There was a movement behind him, and turning, he distinguished in the gloom the figure of a man slowly rising from a sofa, where he had evidently been dozing.

The next moment the man had struck a match and lighted the gas, revealing to Mr. Quish's astonished gaze a woman several years older than his benefactress, and an elderly, nervous little fellow with grey beard, who was virtually fuming with rage.

"Who are you, sir?" he exclaimed, "and what is your business?"

Mr. Quish could not on the moment find words to reply. He realised that his position was a most awkward one, the fact having dawned suddenly upon him that his beautiful chance acquaintance had been guilty of making him the butt of a heartless practical joke.

"Your words to my wife, sir," went on the little bearded man, "require an explanation. By what right, sir, do you——"

"I beg your pardon," put in Quish, having by this time, in a measure, pulled himself together. "I beg your pardon most sincerely. I have made a mistake. I never saw your wife until this moment. I—I—I——"

The lady hastened to confirm the story.

"I am sure, my dear," she said, addressing her husband "that the gentleman will be able to explain everything. I have no more knowledge of him than you have. I have never seen him in my life before. I——"

The husband gave evidence of increasing irritation.

"Tut! Tut!" he interposed, "you cannot deceive me. I know better. Do you think I did not hear your conversation?"

"But I did not speak a word," pleaded the wife, who Quish now observed was quite pretty, and well calculated to fill an elderly husband's heart with jealous misgivings.

"Do not dispute with me," returned her lord; "I am not so old but that I can hear, and I am not so old but that I can see. Yes, madam, see. Did I not hear him call you Mrs. Mandeville? Did I not see you here standing before him while he talked to you about knowing him better? Ah! yes; it is quite clear to me now. I need no explanation; I will accept none. It is a flirtation you have been having, and you dared to receive the object of it under my roof."

The gentleman was shaking his fist so violently that his cuff had crept out and over the edge of his coat sleeve.

At this juncture Mrs. Mandeville fell to weeping, and Mr. Quish once more began an explanation.

"Not a word, sir," Mr. Mandeville interrupted. "I do not know that I can blame you, especially. You would not be human did you not accept encouragement given by a pretty woman. Ah! How different was my first wife! How different is my daughter! Modest and good, they would have repelled the advances of a stranger."

Mrs. Mandeville gave signs of hysterics, and Mr. Quish moved towards the door.

"If you will excuse me," he said. "I will withdraw. Since I cannot make you believe me, it is useless for me to attempt further to disabuse your mind."

As he spoke the door bell rang.

"Ah!" went on the husband and father, "that is she now. My little girl, I will let her in myself. I want her so badly at this moment. She is all I have left me," and there was an indication of tears in his voice as he spoke.

Mr. Quish had just turned to Mrs. Mandeville with a request for pardon on his lips when the sound of a familiar voice coming to his ears from the hall, caused him to stop and listen.

"Oh, papa dear," he heard, "how excited you are! Why, you're actually crying."

"Yes, my pet," came in broken tones from the old gentleman, "your stepmother has grossly deceived me, and you—you, my dear—are now my only comfort."

"I'm sure there must be some mistake—" Mr. Quish heard and waited for no more.

"There is! There is!" he fairly shouted, darting out to meet them, "and you can and will explain it all."

Miss Mandeville—the heroine of the 'bus ride—burst into laughter.

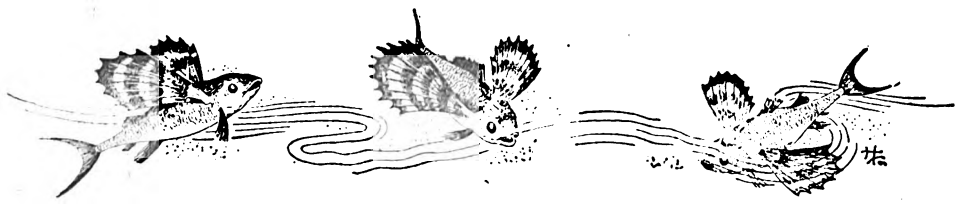
"How odd!" she exclaimed, "how very odd! Now I remember I gave you one of my mamma's cards instead of my own."

"You—you—" gasped the old gentleman, "do you mean to say you give cards to strange gentlemen whom you meet in 'buses and invite them to call on you? O, this is worse than ever, and I thought—I thought that you——"

"Now don't excite yourself, papa dear," Miss Mandeville urged, "I did nothing wrong, I am sure. The gentleman, you see, has merely come to return twopence which I was good enough to lend him this morning to pay his fare. He will, I am quite sure, having cancelled the debt, go, and never presume to call again. Am I not right?"

And Mr. Quish under the circumstances had no alternative but to agree that she was.

T. Sawdby.



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For Safe Custody.

An Ex-Bank Clerk's Tale.

We were sitting round the fire in my diggings, when the conversation turned upon burglars.

"Talking of burglars," said Dick Chester, from the depths of his hammock chair, "do you remember a few years ago when the Metropolitan and Western Bank paid a much smaller dividend than usual, to the great surprise and dismay of the shareholders? You would recollect, Warham, I'm sure."

I nodded in reply. My father had been a shareholder in that respectable establishment, and some of his comments at the time had lived in my memory; in fact, I have utilised them myself on one or two occasions.

"Well," said Dick, "I was a clerk at the time, and was one of the few who knew the real reason of the diminished profits. It was kept very dark at the time; but as the bank has amalgamated with several others now, and I am no longer in its service, I don't mind spinning you the yarn if you care to hear it."

We conferred together and told him he might tell the tale if it was proper.

"When I was in the Metropolitan and Western Bank West-end Branch," he began, "there were two other men in the office who seemed to stand out above their fellow clerks—seemed to attract more attention as it were.

"One was Nathaniel Fipps, our chief clerk—about the finest specimen of a blithering idiot that ever stepped. How he ever got his responsible post beats me. Without brains, without common sense, and utterly without aspirates, he spent the day sitting in his box and gazing down the office with a smug look of self-satisfaction on his face that was a treat to see. He looked just as if he fancied that *he* was the controlling lever that manipulated the working of the bank.

"Of course his proper duties of arranging the work and the holidays were left to take care of themselves. If you asked him a question relating to the work, he generally made some remark that had no bearing at all on the subject, or else he tried to be facetious, which was more riling still. Oh! we *did* love him, I can tell you.

"The other man was a young chap of about two years my senior. Jim Stevens his name was, and he was a rattling good man. Very smart about his work and used his head over it; didn't do it like a machine as most bank clerks do. I didn't fancy him altogether, as he never seemed quite straight and he had a devil of a temper, but I was more friendly with him than any of the other men were.

"It was his temper that dished him finally. He had a furious row with Fipps one day about something in the work, and that silly old idiot, instead of ordering him back to his desk to cool down, tried to be funny. Stevens, being in a towering rage, construed the remark as an insult and smacked Fipps in the mouth. The inevitable followed; he was had up before the directors and promptly sacked, and we never saw him again. Smart men generally go off like that, only old fools like Fipps hang on for ever. We missed Jim after he'd gone, I can tell you.

"About three months after this we opened a current account in the name of Haigh and Co.—commission agents they styled themselves. They were regularly introduced, and commenced their account with a respectable amount. Only one member of the firm ever came into the bank, and he was a gentlemanly-looking chap with a black beard and blue spectacles. I had to speak to him one day and he seemed a very decent sort.

"Now you must know that a great many of our customers used to send us plate chests and deed boxes for safe custody, which we stowed away downstairs in the strong rooms. The position of these strong rooms was as follows: They lay underneath the bank and were guarded first by a huge steel door, a clutch bolt I think

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the name is, which was locked in two places with different keys. The manager kept one key and the chief clerk the other, so that both had to be present to open the door.

"Just inside this first door was another, which was more like a grating, a grille I believe they call it. These two doors led to the room where we kept all the boxes; to get at the money one had to open two more similar doors at the end of this first room. However the box room is the one we have to deal with.

"Soon after Haigh and Company opened their account they sent round to the manager saying that a large chest of plate was passing through their hands, and could they be allowed to deposit it at the bank for a night 'for safe custody.' Of course permission was granted, and soon after the chest arrived—a huge thing and fairly heavy.

"It was stowed away downstairs, and the next morning was fetched out again—to be forwarded to a country bank, so Haigh and Company said. Curiously enough, Haigh drew all the money off their current account, the same day, excepting five pounds.

"For six weeks work went on as usual, and then one day one of the customers came in to see his deed box, which was brought up for him, and he opened it in the manager's room.

"Then came a row. His box, which contained his securities, had been opened, and all the bearer bonds had been stolen—nearly two thousand pounds worth altogether.

"The old man was furious. The manager thought there must be some mistake—that he had never had those bonds in his box at all, but when we came to examine downstairs we soon discarded that theory. About twenty boxes had their seals broken and looked very much as if someone had been tampering with the locks.

"We communicated with those customers whose boxes had been tampered with, and they came in to examine their property. And the property, left for 'safe custody,' had been despoiled to the extent of nearly £30,000 in bearer bonds and diamonds a lady customer had sent in.

"The bank had to make good the loss in order to keep the matter quiet; it would never have done to let it be known our strong rooms were accessible to burglars; why, we shouldn't have had an account left.

"How the robbery was effected no one could make out. No one ever visited the strong rooms by himself—the grille was always locked all day, and if any boxes were wanted the chief clerk went down with a messenger to fetch them up. At night the manager took one key of the door to his house over the bank and the chief clerk took the other home with him. In addition to this a messenger slept in the office just in front of the door leading down to the strong rooms.

"The stolen bonds were found to have been all sold, and though they had passed through several hands, were traced back to a 'young man.' As there were several young men in London at the time the description was rather vague. It generally is a young man who does these sort of things, older men don't seem to care about running the risk. This particular gentleman, however, was never traced. He was absolutely unknown, and the mystery of the robbery seemed as if it would never be solved.

"About eighteen months after, I received a letter from West Australia. I recognised the writing as Jim Stevens' at once. Wondering what he was writing about, and hoping it wasn't for a loan, I opened it, and read a follows:

"Dear Dick,—No doubt by this time various discoveries have been made in your office, and as very likely suspicion may be resting on some of you, I think I had better set your minds at rest by explaining matters.

"Do you remember an account of Haigh & Co. and a certain plate-chest sent by them to you for safe custody? Well, that chest, when you received it, contained nothing more valuable than myself and some peculiar tools admirably adapted for lock picking. You see I was a partner in the firm of Haigh & Co. I made such good use of my night in the box room, owing to my knowledge of the customers and their investments, that the chest was of far more value when it was fetched away from the bank. We have, my two pals and myself, cleared about £9,000 apiece, and are here in Coolgardie enjoying it. Don't let anyone trouble to catch us. I would defy the smartest 'tec in the world to pot us now. Love to all in the office, and kick old Fipps for me.—Yours fraternally, "(Signed) Jim Stevens.

"Directly I read this letter I tumbled to the whole thing. Jim had remained concealed in his box until the strong rooms had been locked up for the night, and then he had come out with a good fourteen hours before him in which to do his deeds of darkness. His knowledge of the customers and their investments had enabled him to pick out the best boxes.

"It was a fine stroke of judgment that made him choose the latter part of August for his venture, as very few people are in town then, and not likely to come for their boxes. So he could reasonably expect a fair start before anything was found out.

"Well, I handed Jim's letter to our manager, and his face when he read it was a picture, though his rage was nothing compared to old Fipps'. That message *re* the kicking nearly made him mad. I was ordered to say nothing about the matter, but though everything was kept very quiet I managed to get hold of one or two facts. Of course they tried to trace the individual who sent the letter from Perth, W.A., and did actually succeed in finding that out by the merest chance.

"One of our detectives was spending the evening at a friend's house in Perth and he met a manager from a bank there.

"This manager, during the evening, told them a yarn about a letter he had received some time back, asking him to post an inclosed letter as soon as he conveniently could, as the writer had a bet about the time it took to get out to West Australia and back. Like a good sportsman, he posted the inclosure and thought no more of it. Our detective, never thinking about its being anything to do with his mission, asked the manager where the inclosed letter was addressed to. It made him sit up though when he heard it was sent to a man called Chester in the Metropolitan and Western Bank.

"Well that fairly upset all their calculations. It was pretty evident that Jim had sent this letter out to be posted in Australia as a blind, while he and his pals cleared out to some other part of the world. Of course he never thought that the business of the letter would come to light, so doubtless he was chuckling to himself over the thought of the detectives searching all over Coolgardie for him.

"To cut a long story short, old Jim has never been heard of from that day to this. Personally, I expect he's living like a duke somewhere in South America. And, scoundrel though he is, I should be sorry if he were to be caught, for though he deserves a long spell in the jug, yet I could forgive him everything for the clout on the head he once gave that old Fipps."

Howard Warham.

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SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge.

CHAPTER XI.

The Opening of the Council.

Every bell in Paris, whether from church tower or convent turret, was ringing its loudest, merriest peal, and the varied tones, from the low, clear note of the Angelus to the harsh clang of the tocsin, rent the morning air with deafening noise. At a very early hour the principal streets were thronged by eager, chattering crowds of small citizens and artisans, while the more important merchants solemnly occupied their own thresholds. Every street corner was marked by expectant groups, every window was filled by eager faces of women and children, and as the gutter urchin of that time was but little behind his modern representative in cheek and ubiquity, every available projection was adorned by festoons of arms and legs, twined ingeniously round wherever their owners could insinuate them.

It was one of those days when the heart of Paris is stirred as that of one man, whether for joy or sorrow, for a *fête* or for the news of a battle, for a marriage or for a funeral, for a display of fireworks or for a revolution, and the cause of all this interest was the opening of the famous council under the presidency of Gratien Florent, Bishop of Orvietto and Papal Legate, to inquire into the second marriage of King Philip Augustus, whom the Pope had summoned to appear in person before the Tribunal.

The bare fact of their powerful and victorious monarch being called to account in their midst would have been enough to rouse the people of Paris; but the point now at issue had a deep personal significance for every man and woman in the city, inasmuch as the decision of the Council meant the continuance or the removal of that merciless interdict which was striking terror to the heart of every subject of the French Crown.

From time to time a nobleman, dressed in the brave attire of the day, and followed by his gay and saucy page, passed by the waiting thousands, and a goodly array of priests, abbots, bishops and high dignitaries of the church made their way in solemn state to the chapel of the New Palace in the heart of the city, where High Mass was to be celebrated with stately pomp and gorgeous ritual.

The ceremony lasted three hours, during which time the bells pealed forth unweariedly, but as the last words of blessing fell from the lips of the Archbishop inside the chapel, every bell was hushed and, while the last vibrations still lingered in the air, the long procession of magnificently robed ecclesiastics, preceded by sacred banners, smoking censers, and burning tapers, descended the chapel steps singing the psalm *Quare fremuerunt gentes* to a grand old plain-song chant, and crossed the open court-yard to where another flight of steps led up to the ancient throne room in which the Council was to hold its sittings.

The vast crowd stood in breathless silence to watch the imposing spectacle. Every head was bared, every breast was marked by the Holy Sign, the more devout knelt in lowly adoration, and not even Ezekiel or Tréfouilloux dared to raise a mocking cry, so mighty was the hold that the Church's ceremonial had upon the minds of men in the Middle Ages.

As the last of the procession passed out of sight a new excitement arose, and wild sounds of jubilation rang through the air. Caps were thrown up, handkerchiefs and gaily coloured sashes were waved from the windows, and hearty cheers rang from every throat as the King appeared in the Rue St. Honoré on his way to answer the Papal summons.

His people loved Philip Augustus, for he was brave and strong, and a man of right royal mien. As to his matrimonial affairs, Paris had always judged a man leniently in such matters, and so they excused their monarch, even while their hatred increased daily and hourly of Agnes de Méranie, as the cause of all their troubles.

The King was a goodly sight on this memorable morning. He always looked his best on horseback, and now he was clad in full battle array, with the crown encircling his helmet, as if to remind his judges of his royal rank. He rode with raised visor, surrounded by all the great vassals of the crown, with their glittering suites, and protected by his imposing bodyguard.

"With all those fine lances," said one to another in the crowd between the shouts of "*Vive le Roi*," "with all those men, the King could easily have made the council come to him at the Louvre, instead of his going to them in the city."

Everyone felt sure that the King would never yield if the decision went against his marriage with Agnes, and in spite

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of all that his obstinacy would entail upon themselves, his loyal subjects could not suppress a certain thrill of pride as they thought of the iron will and resolute independence of their ruler, for patriotism had only been stifled by self-interest among the intriguing clique of the *haute noblesse*.

When the King disappeared within the palace, one of his attendant nobles turned aside his horse and began to force his way through the crowd in the direction of Nôtre-Dame. Though he rode with closed visor everyone knew it was Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet and Friend of the King, and all who could, got out of his way as fast as possible, for they knew that he had no scruple in riding down any who stood in his path. All did not escape free from injury, however, many a one cringed and fell under the sharp blows he dealt to right and left on the hapless wretches who chanced to be within his reach. Montruel was in a savage mood, and was glad to vent his rage on those who were too weak to do more than revile him. He rode on recklessly till he got clear of the crowd and turned into the quiet side streets leading to the cathedral.

Here all was silent and deserted, only at the corner of the Rue de la Calandre three men stood, cup in hand, at the door of one of the taverns. These men were Maître Samson, Maître Honoré the Freemason, and Tristan de Pamiers, King of the Basoche. As he passed these men Amaury Montruel stooped down a little and called out: "To-night!" with a significant glance at Samson, but he never drew rein.

"My lord Amaury seems in so great a hurry that he has forgotten his manners," said Tristan in his calm, cynical tones. "He might at least have stopped and greeted me as becomes a gentleman."

"You heard him, comrades," asked Samson, not vouchsafing to notice the last remark, "he said 'to-night.' Now, are we ready?"

"I have undertaken," said Tristan, "to lead your rabble, and to supply them with trappings that will give them the appearance of students. I have the trappings, and when you bring me the rabble we can soon rig them out."

"I have promised," said Maître Honoré, "to provide three or four hundred loafers, masons' labourers they call themselves, with good lungs to shout and good fists to fight.

The long procession of magnificently-robed ecclesiastics.

It is the very least one can do for so gracious a Queen who scatters sweet smiles wherever her fair presence shows itself. It's no use to think of taking any of the regular masons, for men who really work never meddle in a riot."

"Then all promises well," chuckled Samson, rubbing his lean, bony hands, "Maître Honoré brings the men, and Tristan the costumes. You provide the viands and I will add the sauce in the shape of a horde of cut-throats and thieves, who'll shout louder than all the rest if they think there's a drink to be got by it."

Montruel pursued his headlong course through the empty alleys, and across the deserted inclosure, which presented a striking contrast to the lively scene he had just quitted, and indeed to its own usual appearance. Only two or three men were to be seen working on the hugh edifice, all the loiterers were swelling the crowd in the city and, having tied up his horse, he entered the building unperceived and went straight to where the wonderful image was being fashioned.

Several days had passed since that eventful evening when Madame Agnes had braved the horrors of Cadocu's den, and in the short interval Montruel seemed to have aged ten years. His face was drawn, furrowed by deep lines, and was pale as death, while out of their dark-rimmed sockets his eyes shone with feverish brilliancy, and glanced hither and thither with uncontrollable restlessness. Each sleepless night and every hour of anguish had left its mark upon the man's face.

Madame Agnes had been obdurate, and had banished him from her presence till he should have struck the decisive blow and freed her from her rival.

When he entered the shed the two negroes were sitting crossed-legged, one on either side of the statue which, though not yet polished, had evidently received its last touch from the master's chisel.

"Where is Jean Cador?" he asked, looking round in search of the Syrian; but neither of the slaves attempted to answer him.

"Oh, of course, they don't know him by that name!" he said to himself.

"Where is Mahmoud-el-Reis?" he repeated.

The bright, glassy eyes flashed a look of recognition, but still no answer was forthcoming. Amaury walked to the middle of the room and for the first time took notice of the finished statue.

"What?" he murmured incredulously. "Can he have done that in a week? Impossible!"

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The idea of demoniacal assistance immediately presented itself to his mind, but a second surprise of even more significance was awaiting him. He looked at the statue intently as if he could not believe his own eyes, then exclaimed:

"It is! It is the Queen herself! Where *can* he have seen her? Or is it only a chance resemblance?"

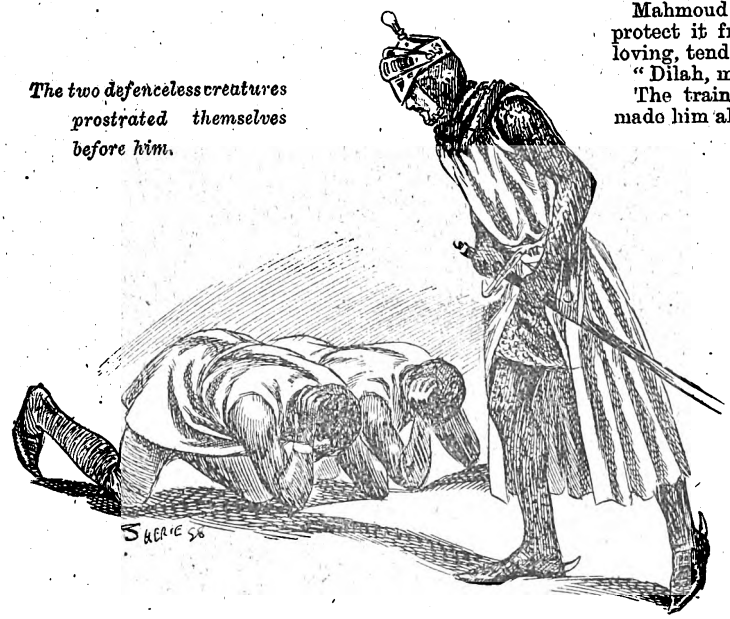
He stepped back and looked at it from all points of view, then walked round it and examined every detail closely, while the two slaves remained as dusky foils to its dazzling purity.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "it is Ingeburge and no other! I could not be deceived, but *how* has he done it?"

Turning quickly to the slaves, he asked imperiously:

"Has any woman been here to visit your master?"

Still the same impassive silence. Amaury, whose every



The two defenceless creatures prostrated themselves before him.

nerve was strained almost beyond endurance, could ill brook this sullen defiance. He laid his hand threateningly on his sword, and the two defenceless creatures prostrated themselves before him in an agony of fear. Seeing that his anger was by no means appeased, they slowly opened their mouths and thus pleaded their own cause most effectually. He saw that their tongues had been torn out, and so could tell no tales. In justice to Mahmoud-el-Reis, it must be said that he had borne no part in this brutality, for the slaves had been sold to him in this condition.

Montruel shrugged his shoulders saying:

"Diable! So that's the way he keeps his secrets, is it? I shall never know the truth, and I don't feel inclined to trust that infidel too blindly," said Montruel aloud.

A slight noise at the other end of the room caused him to turn round, and he saw Mahmoud standing in his customary attitude, with his arms folded across his breast before the curtain which shut off part of the shed. The Syrian had doffed his costly Oriental dress, and was wearing the simple clothes of a French mason.

"He whom you call 'infidel,' has never yet broken faith with any man. It were well if the same could be said of you, Amaury Montruel!"

The words fell unheeded on the ears for which they were meant, and the Frenchman seized his arm convulsively, saying:

"Is that a portrait? Tell me quickly!"

The Moslem bowed his head in acquiescence.

"Of whom? I must know!"

Mahmoud pointed to the half effaced sketch on the woodwork, but Montruel shook his head impatiently.

"Yes, yes, I know that! But it's very strange——"

The Syrian was watching him closely, and now asked:

"Do you know a woman who is very like that?"

As he got no answer he continued:

"It is not the one you brought here the other day, though you called her the Queen also?"

"No, I know that," was the curt reply.

"Then do you Christians sometimes love two women as well as we?"

Montruel's lips curled and showed his teeth unpleasantly:

"I don't love *that* woman, I hate her!"

Mahmoud drew near to the beautiful statue as if he would protect it from any violence, and as his eyes rested with loving, tender care upon it, he murmured:

"Dilah, my beloved!"

The train of thought always awakened by this name made him almost forget the presence of Montruel, but as an impatient cough brought him back to the disagreeable present he whispered to his handiwork:

"Every soul has its twin. The woman who he says is so like Dilah, must be her twin soul, and whoever she may be, I shall love her!"

Mahmoud-el-Reis resumed his grave, somewhat haughty manner, and peremptorily dismissed the slaves. Then he turned again to his visitor and requested him to be seated.

Amaury's restlessness hardly permitted him to keep in the same position for two seconds together, and he visibly chafed under the slow, deliberate movements of the Syrian.

"It is time that we settled this business," he began.

Mahmoud bowed his head:

"The Will of Allah be done! You must first hear what I have to say to you, Amaury Montruel, for I know you do not trust the 'infidel' yet."

CHAPTER XII.

The Moslem Speaks.

"Whichever of us," began Mahmoud-el-Reis in his solemn, impressive manner, "hesitates to sacrifice his own life, if needful, in the accomplishment of his master's orders, commits a sin; but equally he who risks his life uselessly, even while obeying his master's orders, commits a crime which can only be expiated by the seventh penance."

"You don't seem to have understood me," interrupted Montruel. "We have no time to lose in talking, it must be done to-day, this very day!"

"Yes, I understand *you*, but you must now try and understand *me*. In my country we speak no useless words. The King wears steel armour, and is guarded by valiant and faithful guards. I will not attack him either while wearing that armour or when guarded by his troops."

Montruel had taken off his helmet and was sitting with his head between his hands. When the Syrian paused he murmured, almost mechanically:

"The King knows all! The King knows too much! It is no use to think of going back now!"

Mahmoud had moved to the window, and was gazing down on the arm of the Seine which wound round the cathedral, its banks fringed by the quaint, picturesque buildings with their painted roofs, gables and turrets; but ever and anon his eyes wandered back to the beautiful statue. He hardly heard Amaury's words, for his mind was full of his approaching return to Dilah and the land of his birth. Part of his

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task was completed, and if this man abided by his promise, the rest could soon be accomplished. At present he was the only channel open by which the King could be reached with safety. Suddenly he began again in a seemingly irrelevant strain:

"Salim, too, was guarded by men and armour, and he was as far above your King as the Sun is greater than the stars—Salim, the friend of God, the Commander of the Faithful. He had five hundred black eunuchs, armed with scimitars of the most finely tempered steel, who never spared any who dared to look upon their master. To see him was to die—his name alone made men tremble from Bagdad to the far East.

"Mohammed, the Holy and Strong, the Vicegerent of Heaven upon earth, told me to go to Bagdad and kill Salim the Commander of the Faithful. Twelve *Fédavi* had already gone forth on this errand, but none had returned, and their bones were rotting in the sewers of Bagdad. I knew this: I was not yet sixteen: but I started with gold in my belt, and the crystal poniard hidden for the first time in my vest. In the streets of Bagdad there were twelve blocks of marble which they told me marked the spots where those who had tried to assassinate the Caliph had perished, and I went to the front of the palace and plunged my poniard in the ground, saying: 'Here shall perish either Salim or myself!'"

Montruel, who had been listening with unconcealed impatience now got up exclaiming:

"What does all this matter to me? You promised to kill the Queen!"

"And you promised to deliver the King into my hands," was the grave reply.

"Well, have I refused?"

Mahmoud leant against the window frame, looking critically upon the man before him.

"Then if you do not refuse, listen again, so that you may know what I require of you. In the place where I struck my poniard there was nothing but a group of palm trees, so I dressed up as a beggar, dragged a stone to the spot for my seat, and waited for the coming of the Commander of the Faithful. For more than a year I sat there day by day, without success, till at last the Caliph appeared, surrounded by his black guards. I sprang forward, but before I could reach him, a scimitar pierced my breast and I remembered no more. Another year had passed before I could drag myself from my couch of suffering to visit the fated spot. I found that the palm trees had been uprooted and a large hole dug, which they told me was for the foundations of a new Mosque that Salim was building as a thank-offering for his deliverance.

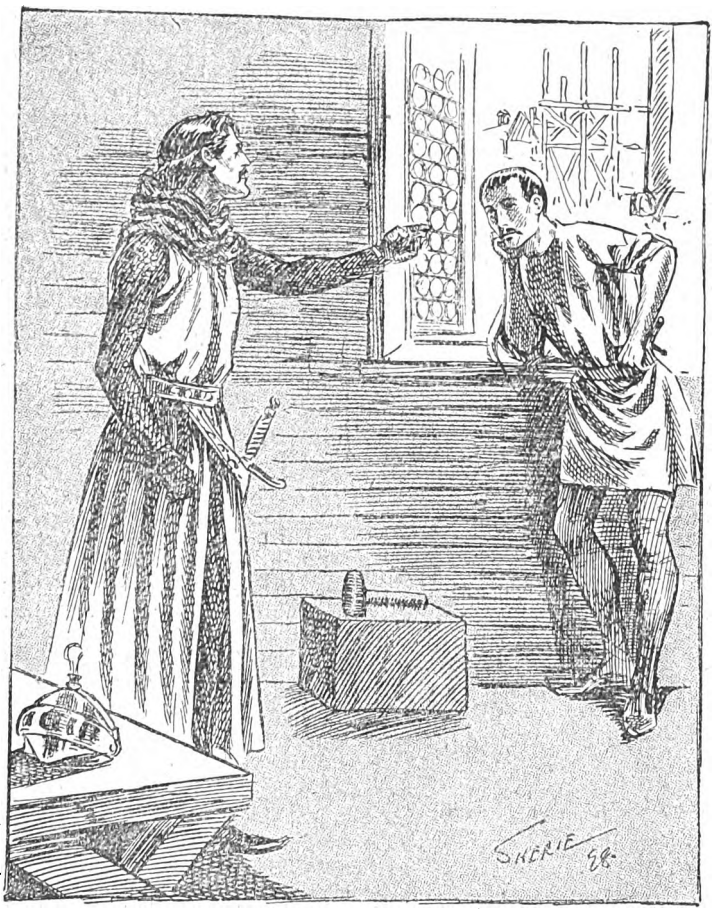
"I went down on my hands and knees and crawled about searching for the place I had marked with my poniard, and at last by the mercy of Allah, I found it untouched in the midst of the space left for the main entrance. All round me men were working at delicate scroll work for the decoration of the Mosque, and carving of every description was being carried out by artists of great cunning.

"The prophet inspired me to learn their craft, and for four long years I worked amongst them, and lived in the growing temple till I knew every stone of it. I had mastered all the branches of the art, and my teachers mentioned my skill to the Caliph, who took me into his employ under the following circumstances:

"Above the spot I had chosen, the stately arch had risen to its appointed height, and only the carved keystone was wanted to complete it, but twenty times that stone had been cut and carved only to fly to pieces through the agency of some evil spirit, as men said, before it could be raised to its place."

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Montruel in exasperation at the long-winded deliberation of the man he dared not offend, "do you think I can stay here all day while you meander on in these waking dreams, Maître Jean Cador?"

"I waited seven years to kill the Caliph," replied the Moslem, unmoved, "and I have only been seven days in Paris. If you cannot serve me as I wish to be served, let us part. I can bide my time."



"What does all this matter to me? You promised to kill the Queen!"

"Go on," sighed his hearer hopelessly, gnawing his nails in nervous irritation.

"I was the cause of those twenty stones flying to pieces, for I had learnt in Kathay the secret of making that mysterious powder which explodes when brought into contact with fire and bursts every barrier that confines it. I spent my nights in manufacturing this powder with sulphur and saltpetre, then a few hours before the stone was to be placed I bored a hole, inserted some of the powder and applied a fuse.

"The Caliph said to me: 'Mahmoud-el-Reis, you are skilful and love your work, will you undertake to cut and carve me a stone that can be fixed in its place without accident? If you succeed I will give you 20,000 sequins: if you fail, you shall be flogged to death on the spot.'

"'I undertake to cut and carve the stone,' I replied, 'if

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the King of Kings, the sight of whose splendour dazzles like the rays of six suns, will accord one favour to his poor slave.'

"'There is but one God and Mahomet is His Prophet! The favour that I ask is that the Kings of Kings will shed the light of his presence on the scene of my labours and occupy the place I shall assign to him when the stone is fixed.'

"I took a year to cut and carve the stone, which was nearly half the size of this shed, and when it was finished, I passed the night beside it with a drawn scimitar in my hand. On the following day Salim greeted me with gracious approval, and asked where he should stand in order to fulfil his promise. I indicated to him the exact spot which my poniard had pierced seven years before, and he took up his position there under a silken canopy upheld by sixteen slaves.

"At a sign from me the pulleys began to work, and the gigantic stone was lifted from the ground and swung in mid air. I was on the top of the framework supporting the arch, with my dagger concealed in my breast. When the huge mass hung directly over the silken canopy, I drew my dagger, cut the ropes and shouted the dreaded name of Mohammed, Lord of the Mountain, while the great stone thundered to the ground, crushing all beneath it.

"I tell you all this, because I feel here in Paris as I did in Bagdad, too weak to cope with a monarch surrounded by his guards, and because I wish to know if you will bring Philip Augustus here, and place him in the doorway of Nôtre-Dame at the day and hour I shall indicate to you?"

"A brilliant idea, a splendid way out of the difficulty, comrade! I cannot promise to bring the King here at any hour you may assign, but I can give you notice of the time when I know he will have to pass through the door, and that comes to the same thing."

"Yes, that comes to the same thing."

"Well then, that is settled most satisfactorily," said Montruel briskly, "now for your share of the bargain. You don't know what I suffer, what tortures I endure till that deed is accomplished. I may not see her whom my soul adores while that woman lives. I am parted from my heart's desire, from the one for whom alone I live, and every moment away from her is an eternity of suffering. You who love, ought to sympathise with me, for I adore this woman as you adore Dilah——"

"Do not dare to let *that* name pass *your* lips, nor venture to sully it by comparison with the one you think you love."

Montruel felt he could have flown at the man's throat, but he controlled his fury, though he bit his lips till they bled in the attempt. Mahmoud was again standing in front of the statue, saying in a voice of deep self-reproach:

"It is my fault that they are able to profane thy name, for I betrayed it to them, and I have even dared to show them thine image, which the Prophet has forbidden to his followers. Pardon me, Dilah, my beloved; They shall never again profane thy name, and I call Allah to witness that they shall not have thine image!"

The last two sentences were spoken so low that they escaped Montruel's ear, and he was so used to the Moslem's murmured utterances of the names "Allah" and "Dilah" that he paid little attention.

The Syrian drew a curtain round the statue, and closed it with loving care.

"You've not told me yet how you propose to gain access to the Princess Ingeburge!" said Montruel.

At the name of Ingeburge a creaking sound was heard behind the partition which faced outside and overlooked the great doorway. Mahmoud listently intently, but without losing his presence of mind, but Montruel started violently and made for the window, saying nervously:

"Is it possible that anyone can have overheard us?"

"Look out, and satisfy yourself."

Montruel stretched half his body, with great difficulty, through the window and carefully looked about him. There was not a human being nearer than the occasional passers-by in the streets far beneath them, for the precincts of the cathedral were still deserted, and on the scaffolding

Lay as one dead at the feet of the veiled statue.

immediately below there lay only the many-shaped stones, some waiting to be carved and others ready to be fitted into their resting places.

"There's no one up here, so far as I can see," he said, drawing his head in and carefully closing the rickety shutters.

"And is it difficult to get into the Abbey where Queen Ingeburge is confined?" asked the Moslem meditatively.

"Almost impossible."

"Even for you, the King's favourite?"

"Even for me."

"They tell me there is a hospital attached to the Abbey?"

"So there is," replied Montruel, eagerly catching at the idea. Then his face clouded again as he added:

"But you are not ill."

"No, but I can fall ill."

"It's no use pretending—" began Montruel.

"I said nothing about pretending," replied Mahmoud drily; "I said *fall ill*. Now, listen carefully to me and don't miss a word that I speak. In another moment I shall be lying there, at your feet, in a state of unconsciousness, without speech, sight, or movement. You will fetch the first masons you can find and tell them to put me on a stretcher, then, I think," he added with a sardonic smile, "your powerful influence will be able to gain admittance to the hospital for a dying man?"

Montruel looked at him in speechless wonder, and before he could find words to reply, the Syrian had drawn a small phial from his vest and had placed it to his lips. In a moment his words were fulfilled, and after a slight convulsive movement he lay as one dead at the foot of the veiled statue.

(To be continued.)

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Your Esteemed Inquiry Duly to Hand.

I hope my readers have taken to heart the appeal made to them on behalf of the Fresh Air Fund. I remember last year *Short Stories* contributed quite a large sum to the F.A.F., and was responsible for the happiness of several thousand children. This year I hope my readers will respond in the same generous-hearted manner. If you have not any spare cash by you, grub around and dig up some old toys, mail carts, bicycles or anything of that sort which might be either utilised by the children, or turned into cash.

P. T. E.—At the present moment there are 875 commissioned officers in the Army who have risen from the ranks.

Adam writes: "Are reptiles unknown in any country?"———Newfoundland is quite without reptiles; no snake, frog, toad, or lizard has ever been seen there.

Dissatisfied. — Perhaps a certain garden in China would suit you. It embraces an area of 50,000 square miles; is all meadowland, and filled with lakes, ponds, and canals.

C. T.—No, "odd or even" cannot be regarded as a modern game in any sense. We read that on one occasion during the Roman festivals of Quinquatria, Augustus sent his daughter 250 denarii so that she could play at "odd or even" and thus while away the weary hours. Which also proves that feminine gamblers are not peculiar to this *fin de siècle*.

Caterer.—The Sultan of Turkey spends more for his table than any other human being of either modern or ancient times, namely, £1,000 daily.

Q. A. would be glad to know if the use of artificial limbs was known to our ancestors———Yes, indeed, as far back as B.C. 700, when they were made use of by the Egyptians. They were made by the priests, who were the physicians of that early time.

D. D.—The chloride, bromide, and iodide of nitrogen are the most powerful explosives known, but their instability is so marked that they are useless. A mere jar will send off the chloride of nitrogen with fearful violence.

L. L.—Barristers' wigs are made from horsehair, most of which is imported from China and South America. The discomfort of wearing these wigs during hot weather is not so great as you would imagine, for they are quite light. A junior's wig weighs but two and a quarter ounces, and the price has always been six guineas; the wig of the Lord Chief Justice, however, turns the scale at five ounces, and costs twelve guineas.

B. Haslan.—The annual cost of clothing the Life Guards is given as £7 9s. 3d. for each man. The infantry of the line are turned out at £2 17s. 2d.; and the Highlander, with his feathery cap and tartan kilt, costs £3 16s. 5d.

Abstainer.—Hot milk is a recognised drink in some of the German cafés. It is served in a cup with a saucer, and two pieces of sugar always accompany it.

Curious writes: "I have seen it stated that a single fox skin has fetched as much as £200. This must be a mistake."———It is not the Reynard of our nursery days that is meant, Curious; it is the black fox of Kamschatka. The skin of this animal, when dressed, becomes an attractive blue, and a single skin has been known to sell for the figure you mention. A pelisse worn by the Emperor Nicholas I., which was lined with the fur of the black fox, cost £2,000.

Tommy A.—The youngest Colonel in the British army is Colonel Wingate, R.A., who has not yet completed his thirty-seventh year.

Bee-keeper has hit upon what he considers a really good idea. He writes: "Why not train the honey bee to carry messages like the carrier pigeon? I have not worked the thing out thoroughly yet, but I am sure it can be done well."———Your idea is not new. Four or five years ago an English bee-keeper set to work to train bees for that purpose, but I have not heard that he was successful. His notion was to take the creature from the hive, stick to its little back a scrap of paper bearing a message in microscopic characters, and throw it into the air. Home it was to go, like the pigeon, but it would have this advantage over the bird, that it would probably not be seen in time of war, or if seen, would be very difficult to shoot.

B. T.—When the telephone wires are overland the rate of transmission is said to be about 16,000 miles a second; where the wires are through cables under the sea the speed is much less.

Glossy.—Yes, in spite of the unqualified condemnation of the mole by most of our farmers, it is a noteworthy fact that sheep thrive best in a pasture infested with these smooth-coated creatures. This is due to the better drainage of the land.

Pat.—During the past year nearly 60,000 acres have been reclaimed in Ireland from bog and marsh lands.

Carat.—The ruby in the centre of the Maltese Cross on the top of the British Crown is the stone given to the Black Prince by King Pedro of Castille after the battle of Najara. At the battle of Agincourt, King Henry V. of England wore it in his helmet.

Freedom wishes to know if negroes were ever sold as slaves in this country; and, if so, when the last sale occurred.———An extract from the *Stamford Mercury* of the 30th November, 1771, will answer both your questions. It runs: "At the sale of a gentleman's effects at Richmond, a negro boy was put up and sold for £32." That was probably the last sale of the kind in this country, for, in the following year, a judgment of the Court of King's Bench decided that slavery could not exist in England.

Milky.—The milk production of the chief European countries is estimated by a German statistician as follows, the figures representing millions of gallons: Germany, 2,843,600; France 2,023,400; Great Britain, 1,785,000; Austria, 1,661,400; Sweden, 441,550; Netherlands, 264,350; Denmark, 225,000; Belgium, 215,500; Switzerland, 211,800.

A. M.—A steeple is an odd place for a statue, but your friend is right in saying that a statue of one of our kings was placed upon the steeple of a London church. Mr. Hucker, a local brewer, presented to the Church of St. George's, Bloomsbury, an effigy of King George II., and it was placed in position on the steeple. That was about 165 years ago. This building is regarded, as far as its exterior is concerned, as the ugliest of its kind in the metropolis; the plan is said to have been suggested by Pliny's description of the tomb of Mausolus.

A. R. C. finds it difficult to imagine a poor peer; he thinks that when a nobleman is overtaken by poverty, he should drop the the title and settle down as a commoner.———This might be considered a great injustice to his children in the event of fortune smiling upon the family again. But in olden times poverty disqualified a peer from holding his position. In the reign of Edward IV. a Duke of Bedford was degraded on this account. The reason is set forth in the preamble of the Act: "Because it (poverty) causeth great extortion' etc., to the great trouble of all such places where the estate (of the impoverished peer) happens to be." There was a comparatively easy way of getting rich in those days.

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Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."

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UPS AND DOWNS OF THE BAROMETER.

Whatever the cause may be, there is no doubt that the average output of human nature varies with the weather. When the barometer is high the community is cheerful. Old chronic maladies let up a little on the sufferers, as an obliging stranger might stoop and loosen one's overtight shoestring. Even pickpockets and politicians think seriously of earning an honest living. People who carry rusty old grudges in their hearts for years on end, are apt to think on bright days whether it wouldn't be better to patch things up and get on more endurable terms with their enemies. The city banker feels moved to give a halfpenny more to his bootblack, and the habitually courteous Englishman may gild his politeness with the ghost of a smile.

On the other hand, when the barometer goes down, the spirits of the people go down with it. Melancholia, like a black fog, begins to spread about, making those who are usually sad feel that the earth is but a graveyard, and turning the quips and quidities of the joker into verbal idiocies that make his friends want to kick him downstairs. It is nearly always during the prevalence of low barometer that the man with murder in his heart makes up his mind to do the dastardly deed, and the poor unfortunates who are tired of life conclude to make an end of it. And as to the influence of the weather on disease (almost any disease), it is very distinct and decided. It is the cold rainstorms that develop one's latent rheumatism, and make him feel like setting the house on fire, or blowing somebody up with dynamite.

Now, if the weather in the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds had always been fine and dry and warm, Mr. George Garwood would never have had an attack of influenza. Not that influenza is really caused by bad weather, but it is *brought out* by it, just as rheumatism is, and pneumonia, and bronchitis, and consumption, and a lot of other ills which seem to lie inside of us waiting for some power to stir them up. But in the early part of 1891 there was plenty of bad weather, and hence it came to pass that Mr. Garwood had an experience of which he writes as follows:

"In the early part of 1891 I had an attack of influenza. After this I was never properly strong. I felt very languid and weakly, my breathing being short. I had a poor appetite, and the food I took gave me no strength.

"My legs were swollen, and I could barely get about, often being confined to bed. As time went on I gradually wasted away to a shadow. I had no pain, but a dreadful sinking, all-gone feeling. Friends who saw me thought I should never recover. I had a doctor, but his medicine did not help me. For over three years I continued in this weak state, when a friend told me how he had benefited by Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Nice, grocer, Bury St. Edmunds, and after taking it felt stronger.

"I continued with it and gradually improved, and was able to get about. Since then, by taking an occasional dose, I keep in good health. You can make use of this statement as you like. (Signed) George Garwood, Horringer, near Bury St. Edmunds, May 13th, 1897."

Influenza has been epidemic often enough of late years in England to make its character familiar to a great number of people. It prevails nearly always in autumn, winter, or early spring, but never in summer. It is often followed by lingering bad health, which the sufferer is apt to attribute to influenza as *a radical cause*, as Mr. Garwood seems to have done. However, influenza *is itself caused* by a certain impurity in the blood, called by the medical writers a micro-organism, a term which means simply a ferment so minute as to be discernible only by the microscope.

As a matter of cold, plain fact, the actual cause of influenza, as of a majority of our best known diseases, is an impure state of the blood produced by fermented or partially digested food in the stomach and intestines, or, in other words, by indigestion, or dyspepsia continued for a considerable length of time. Dyspepsia and some of its frightful consequences, in Mr. Garwood's case, followed the attack of influenza, as he relates. But if he will cast his memory back, he will doubtless recall having been troubled with indigestion *before* the influenza, for Nature never reverses her processes. Mother Seigel's Syrup cured him by setting the digestive system in order, and driving the poison out of his blood. And if I were asked what is the best possible way of fortifying oneself against the mischievous effects of a low barometer, I should say, Keep your stomach strong and your blood clean by taking a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup every time you don't feel quite right.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 486. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 23RD, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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Design No. 340. 10/6. Design No. 340 consists of a Fashionable open-fronted jacket with velvet collar, and full well-made skirt; it is made in the ALLEN FOSTER Specialité Serge, unsurpassed for wear and durability. Costume complete, 10/6. Skirt only, 5/6.

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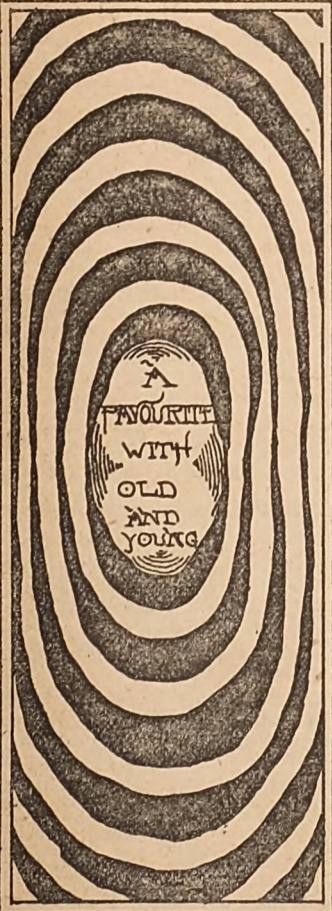
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON



No. 486.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 23rd, 1898.

ONLY A HYDRO FRIENDSHIP.

HARRY MELVILLE'S first opinion of English girls was not very flattering. He said they were either too familiar or to stand-offish. They either giggled and simpered and flirted, or else they were guarded and distant. He liked a girl who could be jolly and natural, and he said, for these qualities, there were none to equal the Australian girls.

He had come over on a pleasure trip, and, after staying a month in London, went to a Hydropathic Establishment in Yorkshire by way of a change.

It was the holiday season, and the place was very full of visitors, dancing and festivities being the order of the hour. The first evening he kept to himself and took stock generally.

He was a bit of a philosopher in his way, and fond of watching his fellow-creatures from his own standpoint, and drawing certain conclusions and theories from what he saw. And as he had lived thirty-six years, he had sifted the human race pretty thoroughly, and flattered himself that he understood it, and could generally read his companions like a book.

When dinner was over, he went at once to the billiard room, and settled himself in one of the most comfortable easy chairs with his pipe, and lazily "took in" the men of the house.

There was, of course, the usual collection one meets at these gatherings, but this was Harry Melville's first

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experience of an English Hydro, and he was rather interested. He noted the two or three frivolous young men who made perpetual efforts to be funny; the middle-aged ones who were more impressed with their own importance than anything else in the world; the old ones who thought all the young ones foolish; and the bores who talked incessantly of their gout and their doctor's directions. He was not particularly impressed with anyone, but he liked best a trio of young men who had evidently come to have a spree and made no secret of it.

They were seated on a window-ledge, swinging their feet just before him, and now and then one or other convulsed his two companions by a lively sally. Harry could not help smiling secretly himself, for their laughter had such a genuine ring in it, and their high spirits were so palpable, that he found them infectious.

They did not appear disposed to bother their heads about any of the other men, but passed remarks on the players and audience, which were certainly humourous, if not flattering.

Presently he heard one of them remark:

"Let's go to the drawing-room."

"What! getting impatient already," said another. "My dear fellow, it isn't ten minutes since you parted!"

"It's a lifetime," said the first speaker, with a deep-drawn sigh, "and then she only looked at me across a sea of serviettes and glasses, half round a mulberry bush."

"Rats, man! she was looking at me," said the third man. "I caught her eye under the lower branch."

"That was the other eye," said the second speaker, "Chip was gazing into the left orb."

"Well, let's go and see who she looks at now," said the one designated Chip. "She's sure to be in the winter garden, and it'll soon be time to dance," whereupon they all three got up and sauntered away.

At their respective offices they were known as Tom Walton, Frank Deed, and Philip James, but to each other they were Chum and Chappie and Chip.

Chum was the eldest, and sometimes he endeavoured to keep the others in order, but his success was not striking. Chip was the youngest, and he was very boyish. His fund of spirits was unlimited, and he was everybody's favourite. Chappie was the best-looking and the lady's man. He was always in love with somebody, but as he fell out as easily as he fell in, his two friends never thought anything of it. However, he was always the first to discover all about the fair ladies of the Hydro, and before dinner was half over the first night he was lost in admiration of a merry blue-eyed girl at an opposite table.

His subsequent behaviour had been a source of great amusement to the other two, who had promptly made a point of requiring his attention every time the blue eyes looked their way.

Moreover, Chip was absolutely certain she only looked at him, while Chum declared he had had an actual smile all to himself.

Harry Melville watched them go, then he dragged himself up and prepared to follow.

He was a very tall man, and as he drew himself to his full height, and stood astride on the hearth, many curious eyes glanced at him. He had the colonial air of careless indifference about him, and rather the appearance of a distinguished stranger. His complexion was very dark, and his eyes bright and penetrating like a bird's, while he had a habit of half closing them, while watching anything closely.

"Have a fifty up?" asked one of the frivolous young men, rather familiarly.

"Thank you, no," replied Melville coolly, and took a long whiff at his cigar; then he sauntered to the door.

In the hall he stood on the doorstep, and looked out into the night.

When he sauntered into the ball-room twenty minutes later, after a passing glance into the drawing-room, he first of all looked round for the trio. He was amused to find them all three, lolling in various postures, about the owner of the blue eyes, who was leaning back in a large armchair, looking considerably amused.

She had evidently been dancing with one of the three, but was nothing loth to do the sitting out with the whole trio.

Melville took a seat near the group, and, as usual, indulged in a little quiet observation.

"My programme for to morrow," he heard her say, "is golf, 10.0 to 1.0; lunch, 1.30; cycling 2.30 to 4.30, frivolling, 4.30 to 5.30; then dress, then dinner, then dance, then sleep."

"What energy!" gasped Chappie.

"Sounds like an automatic machine," said Chip. "Do you permit anyone to follow you through the programme?"

"Oh, dear no! No followers allowed," and she laughed merrily.

"Oh, come," said Chum, "you must at least let us watch the golf."

"Well, I'll perhaps consider it. I'm going to hunt up my brother now; he's been in the smoke-room quite long enough, and he ought to come and dance. Can I get any of you any partners?"

"Thanks awfully. I should like to be introduced to that girl in black," said Chum.

"Come along, then," and she led the way. As she passed Melville's chair, she glanced at him casually, while still talking to her companion.

The indifference of her glance pleased him. She evidently was no more interested in him than the rest of the community, in spite of his prepossessing appearance, and while it did not flatter his vanity, it pleased his taste.

"No followers allowed," he repeated to himself, with inward amusement, and turned his head to watch the dancers.

He could not see them very well, so he changed his seat to one in a dim corner of the winter garden, which had just been vacated by another tall dark man. He had his back to a side entrance, and presently he heard the door swung open, and the ringing voice he was already familiar with, say: "He can't be in here."

"Yes, in that corner, I saw him five minutes ago," said another voice. "See, there he is."

Immediately the door swung to, a quick footstep sounded behind him, and before he had time to turn, a pair of cool, soft hands, were over his eyes and a voice said:

"Who is it, you bad boy? I've been hunting for you everywhere. How dare you be so lazy!"

"Allow me," he remarked politely, and the hands were suddenly withdrawn, with an exclamation of horror.

"Goodness!" she gasped, and then began to laugh.

"I thought you were my brother," she said. "I'm so sorry. He was sitting here a moment ago, and you looked exactly like him. Whatever will you think of me?"

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"Nothing very dreadful, I can assure you," he replied in his slightly drawling fashion. "Perhaps I can understudy your brother still further."

"I was going to fetch him to dance," she said, in her straight way.

Melville was, as a rule, too lazy to dance, but he thought he should like to have a turn with her, because she reminded him of the Australian girls, so he got up at once.

"I think I can manage that part of the programme," he said.

"Yes, do. Come along. I'll introduce you to a very good dancer."

"But I thought you were to be the partner?"

"I? Oh, I'm engaged for the next two," and without giving him a chance to remonstrate, she walked him off to another young lady.

Melville felt victimised, and was very disgusted, but he was too true a gentleman to show it. However, he did not risk any further encounters, but went off to the smoke-room, where he was joined at a late hour by the trio. They appeared to be in higher spirits than ever, and began talking everybody over. Most of their remarks were more candid than flattering, but it was very evident one fair lady was in high favour.

"I call her A 1," said Chip, taking a deliberate aim at a bronze ornament with a penwiper.

"Well you needn't throw the furniture about if she is," replied Chum.

"The latest fashion in emphasising" was the laughing reply; "didn't you know a fashionable preacher threw his glass of water at the congregation the other day, to impress his remarks?"

"Ask old Chappie what he thinks about her. I say, Chappie, you've got it pretty badly this time, I believe," and his blue eyes sparkled mischievously. "Better try Beecham's Pills at once. They're for all ills, and prevention is better than cure."

"Chuck it!" ejaculated Chappie; and sank further down into his roomy armchair.

"What! is it as bad as all that?" continued the incorrigible Chip. "Well, I admire your taste, if that's any consolation. I'm a bit hard hit myself, and old Chum hasn't got off scot free."

"I like that little girl in black," remarked Chum.

"So do I," answered Chip, "but, at the same time, we all know she isn't a patch on Miss Willard. I say, Chappie, old boy, cheer up! I saw her admiring your back hair."

"I expect she discovered how thin it was getting," said Chappie, from the depths of the chair.

"Then I've no doubt she'd think you wanted someone to look after you. Never say die; you'll be all right in a day or two, and Chum and I will help you through the wedding."

At this point Melville got up and stretched himself, and Chip immediately offered him a cigarette. He took it and afterwards came down from his pedestal and joined in their conversation.

The following morning he arrived downstairs early and sauntered into the billiard-room.

He was rather surprised to hear the balls going, and still more so when he found one of the players was Miss Willard, the heroine of the previous evening's conversation and his own little adventure.

She greeted him frankly across the table and then ran up a break of sixteen. He offered himself as marker and was astonished at her skill. He was also particularly struck by the quiet, matter-of-fact way in which she played, and her power of thorough concentration upon the matter she happened to have in hand.

Just as the game concluded the trio strolled in, and in two minutes she was sitting in a window seat with them, entertaining them hugely and being hugely entertained in return.

He watched them lazily, and came to the conclusion that one of the three meant winning her, but he was undecided which. He thought Chip was too young, Chum not quite smart enough, and Chappie a bit too dandified. However, the idea amused him, so he mentally backed Chip, and prepared to get three days' good entertainment out of them.

He did not see much of them during the day, but, in the interval between tea and dinner, he discovered them all four in the winter garden, amusing themselves with tricks. He wondered if any of the trio had managed to dispense with the other two yet, and how it was the three butterflies still kept to the same flower.

Later on he asked her to dance and was well pleased with her performance.

"Once more you remind me of the Australian girls," he said calmly; "they are beautiful dancers."

She looked up at him frankly.

"How else do I remind you of them?" she asked.

"Oh, in various ways."

"For instance?"

"You are very lively and fresh and free."

"Are Australian girls always like that?"

"Very nearly. They don't meet troubles half way. They enjoy life."

"Ah!" and she paused.

Suddenly she turned to him.

"Do Australian men generally amuse themselves by taking stock of their fellow-creatures all day long?"

"Is that meant for a rebuke?"

"Not exactly, but you rather amuse me by doing nothing but look on, and measure the rest of us."

"Human nature is the most interesting study of all."

"Yes? Are you proficient at it?"

"I think so. I have made it a speciality."

"Tell me something about myself. Anything you like; I won't be offended."

"You are very light-hearted."

She smiled a little.

"Is that because I laugh?" she questioned.

"It is the sound of your laugh chiefly."

"Yes, go on."

"Perhaps you would rather I didn't. I never flatter."

"I don't mind. I prefer candour infinitely."

"Well, then, you are rather thoughtless and perhaps a little hasty. A little down on other people who do not reach your standard. You have not had much trouble, therefore you are not a very good sympathiser."

A strange expression flitted across her eyes, but she only said: "How interesting. Tell me some more to-morrow. I must go for the next dance now."

He watched her, and somehow, a new sensation of distrust crossed his mind, but he thrust it aside and went back to the smoke-room.

The next day he observed with interest that Chip was gaining ground and Chappie growing despondent.

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Chum had evidentally given up and wisely transferred his attentions to the little dark girl. Miss Willard, he observed, played tennis with Chip all the morning and afterwards sat in a shady arbour with him. They seemed so happy together that he believed his money was as good as won, and he wondered if she would find time to continue their interrupted conversation again.

In the afternoon a char-a-banc drive was arranged, and, on the return journey, a mere coincidence placed him beside her. She talked to him of many things in her usual bright fashion, and made him tell her a lot about Australia. Her depth of thought and insight surprised him, and he felt still further persuaded that Chip was too young and frivolous for her.

The latter came to help her down at the door, and acted with a certain air of possession, which she did not appear to resent, and Melville half-decided it was a foregone conclusion.

Before she vanished, however, she turned to him again, and said with a bright smile. "You will be able to tell me a lot more to-night Mr. Melville, as you know me still better now. I am quite looking forward to it."

He stood still and watched her walk away feeling a little puzzled.

Did he know her, or did he not?

Anyhow he was sorry she had taken to Chip, for he felt convinced they were unsuited to each other. He was sorry she had gone off with him, too, for there was no one else he cared to talk to much, and somehow he always felt more contented when she was near.

He was glad when the time came for their conversation, and as they strolled out on to the terrace together, he regarded her with quiet criticism.

She was looking extremely well, and as bright and merry as ever. There was a little change about her mouth however, only he did not see it.

"I feel as if you were my father confessor," she said, laughing. "I wonder what you are going to tell me to-night, about my sins and shortcomings."

He smiled, too.

"That isn't a fair way to put it," he said. "You know you asked me."

"Of course I did, and I am most interested. I want you to tell me exactly what you think. You finished last night by saying I had not had much trouble. Suppose you define that a little more clearly. What sort of a life do you think I have led?"

"A very sunny, happy one," he answered at once. "There has been little enough in it to keep you awake at nights. I do not mean that you are frivolous, only gay and happy. I think if trouble came you would face it bravely and fearlessly."

"Do you think I could hide it?" she asked, looking across the garden.

"I doubt it. You have such high spirits, that anything to damp them would be bound to shew itself."

"You don't think I could act?"

"Hardly. I question if you are thoughtful enough. The only thing is, I have noticed you have the power of concentrating your whole mind on the question of the moment."

A slow smile played about her features, and again that sudden self-distrust moved him.

"Sometimes I am accused of being bitter and sarcastic," she said; "how do you account for that?"

"Possibly through the books you have read."

"I see."

There was a long pause and still she looked across the garden. He watched her, and something in her quiet pose and steady gaze attracted him strangely. She seemed to have changed suddenly, and to have the look of a woman who had felt deeply, but learnt the folly of showing it.

He felt as if he could have gone on looking at her indefinitely.

And still she was silent, and still he watched her; and a strong desire grew up in him to tell her that Chip wasn't good enough for her.

He wanted to explain that he was a real good fellow, but not the man to satisfy her.

Then he laughed at himself.

"What had it to do with him?" he asked, and shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "Love was mostly a farce and marriage a lottery, and she was sure to find it out some day, sooner or later."

"Am I right?" he asked at last, with a smile.

She turned and looked at him critically, as if reading how far she might trust him.

Evidently what she saw satisfied her, for she replied very quietly, as she looked away again.

"No; quite wrong."

He looked surprised, but waited for her to speak again.

"Are you leaving to-morrow?" she asked.

"Yes; I think so."

"Then, in all probability, we shall never meet again."

He hesitated a moment, he had scarcely thought about it before.

"I suppose so," he said at last.

"Then I don't know that I need mind telling you why you are wrong. I feel sure I can trust you to guard my confidence."

"You can," he answered simply.

"It will perhaps help you to judge better in future," she went on, then paused a few moments.

"It isn't much," she said at last, "at least it won't seem much to anyone else. It began seven years ago, when I was nineteen. I mean my troubles began then; just at the time when a girl usually expects to have some of her best years. Three months after I left school my mother broke a blood vessel and went out of her mind. I nursed her for two years, during which time she could never be left, night or day. I don't know if you know anything about these cases, but they are among the most pitiful things in life. It broke my father's heart, and I worshipped him. The invalid turns against her nearest and dearest, and he was not strong and well enough to cope with the bitterness of it. When she died, and I was free, I thought to devote every hour to making up to him a little for the past two years, but he was killed in a railway accident four months afterwards."

She paused, and he thought she caught her breath to steady her voice.

Presently she went on quietly: "We were left very poor, and I had to go out as a governess. I won't pretend that I liked it, because I didn't; I hated it. I had to be in London, and I love the country with all my heart. But I stuck to it for four years, and then Phil managed to offer me a home."

She paused again, then added: "If you did not know it before, you know now, that there are some people who have seen so much real trouble that they can take the little inevitable cares too lightly to seem to notice them at all."

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He looked at her with a new admiration in his keen eyes. The moon came out from behind a cloud, and lit up her face. In the pale light she looked strangely beautiful to him, and there was that in her expression which moved him as no woman's face had ever moved him before. He had never been really in love in his life, but in that deep moment he knew that he wanted to fold her to his heart.

Yet he only said simply: "You are very plucky and you have taught me a lesson."

She laughed softly, though the conversation had brought a shadow into her eyes that he had not seen there before.

"And you have encouraged me," she said, "by paying such a tribute, however unintentional, to my success; for I would not like anything there may be in my life ever to damp anyone else's for a moment. We part to-morrow as mutual benefactors, which is as it should be."

Harry Melville looked across the garden in his turn, and there was a long pause.

"We part to-morrow," she had said, and the words seemed to ring in his ears.

"Why should they part?" he asked. "Why should not he be the one to make up to her for those sad years?"

He looked into her face, and the longing strengthened within him to take her in his arms.

He was about to speak, when she intercepted him by saying with a little smile: "My clouds have not all blown by yet, but I hope they will eventually."

"I hope so, too," he said, with an earnestness that made her start, for hitherto he had been usually flippant or callous with her.

She looked at him, and something in his eyes made her turn a little pale.

He saw it, and asked suddenly, in a voice that was new to him. "Is there anything now?"

"Yes; I have a lover and we are separated," she said, simply; and there was a long silence between them.

"I don't know why I should confide in you like this," she continued presently; "but somehow you draw me out whether I wish or not. I suppose it is because there is something so strong and sure about you."

He sat with his face half-turned from her, looking straight before him, and did not reply.

"He is a great friend of Chip's," she went on; "we found it out the day after he came, and that is why we have been so friendly together. He is in Australia now."

"You are not wearing a ring," he said questioningly, in a forced voice.

"No. It is because his people won't acknowledge it, nor mine, so we can't be engaged openly, but it doesn't make much difference. He is very poor, you know, but I don't mind. I shall go out to him as soon as he is able to have me."

"Have you been engaged long?"

"Five years!"

"Five years?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes;" and she smiled softly. "We may have to wait another five, but if it were ten or fifteen, I should still wait. I know you don't believe much in love, and that kind of thing, but I don't like you any the less. Probably it is not your fault, and I always feel sorry for people who think like that, because of what they miss. Don't be alarmed, I'm not going to give you a lengthy, sentimental description of what Tom and I feel, only I can assure you it's something that more than makes up for every year of weary waiting."

He turned to her again and saw her with the love-light shining in her eyes; and his face was very white.

Then he looked into the night, and a sudden awakening came to him. His past life flashed through his mind, and in that brief space he probed into it corners, and realised, as he had never done before, how empty and hollow and unreal it had been.

With all his theorising and philosophising, what did he actually know of the passions of the human heart, compared to this girl beside him?

With all his time and opportunities, what memories had he, either of joys or sorrows, to keep his heart warm in the winter of his years?

He had been content with a cut and dried definition of Love and scoffed at anything that outstepped the limits he assigned.

And now? . . . .

Now he knew, what no amount of reasoning could have taught him. He knew that love is not a formula nor a theory, nor anything that can be understood by thinking about it, but something to be truly known by experience only—a good thing that comes into some lives and makes them beautiful.

A step on the terrace disturbed them and Yetta turned quickly.

"It is Chip looking for me," she said, "I must go."

Then she rested her hand for a moment on his arm.

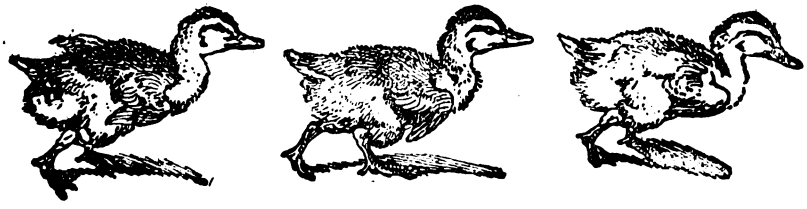
"I have enjoyed our conversation very much," she said. "Thank you for being so sympathetic. I am sorry we must lose sight of each other so soon, but it is generally the way with Hydro friendships.

"I hope some day soon you'll prove for yourself that there is a love that is worth waiting years for."

"I have proved it," he said, half to himself, and Yetta wondered as she turned away.

She did not know that that proving had been in the last half-hour.

GERTRUDE PAGE.



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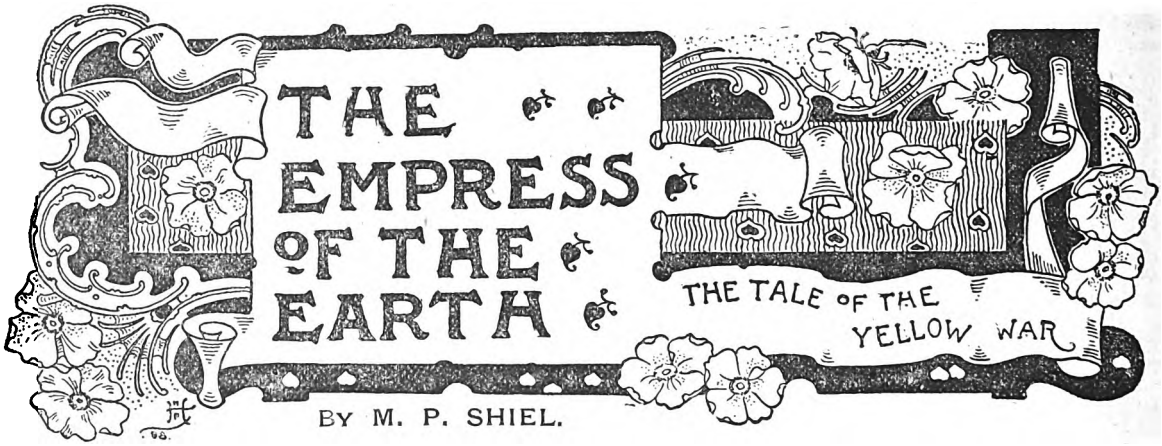

By M. P. SHIEL.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet, and defeats it, but at a cost of all the ships but three, which are shortly afterwards chased and attacked by the Japanese fleet. Affairs now assume a serious aspect in Europe, and the British rout the Germans at New Brandenburg with a loss of 150,000 men. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (they are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison. Ni-ching-tang is Foo-chee's father (although Sin-wan does not know this), and one of the scullions of Yen How's kitchen. John Hardy is cruelly tortured by Sin-wan, acting under Yen How's instructions. Ni-ching-tang, Foo-chee's father, discovers that Sin-wan has murdered his son and Ah-lin. He then goes in revenge and drugs Sin-wan, and enables John Hardy to escape in a boat to Kiao-Chau. The British warship *Iphigenia*, which escaped from the Japanese ships in the last battle, is run ashore at Kiao-Chau, now occupied by the Chinese. The British take possession of the fort and hold it against the Celestials.

CHAPTER XXI.

"What a Face!"

During the afternoon of the seventh day after leaving Tungchow, John Hardy, hugging the coast, arrived in the locality of Kiao-chau harbour. The solitary helmsman had made a good voyage, being familiar with the ocean-winds and their moods, and having an old comradeship with the brine and spray. However, he had several times got wet, and every few minutes now was shaken by a moist cough, which was alternated by rather frequent vomitings due to a constant sickness of the stomach.

He was being wafted along by a gentle breeze, when he spied a portion of a ship's bow above the thin, inaudible fringe of foam which lined the coast afar. And at once, noting its course, he put out further to sea, and lay to ten miles from land.

He guessed at once from the fragmentary look of the wreck that the Chinese had been busy with the English sailors, of whom he had been told. At eleven o'clock, taking advantage of the night wind, he turned eastward, and ran in for the harbour. Unfortunately, all he knew about it was its locality, as the map with which he was provided gave him no details of its features. Ni-ching-tang, indeed, had told him that the Englishmen were upon an *island* in the harbour; but when he entered the basin he saw no island, for in the darkness and distance the contours of the island, which, on the east, is near to the mainland, seemed part of it.

The moon was young, and only just rising; it was a night of stars; things near were visible, things remote lay in a mystery of shadow.

John Hardy ran his bow gently upon a gravelly bottom near the east entrance of the harbour, intending to mount the rising ground and search for the island. For what he knew he might be already on it.

In this way, he came to the east fort, now mostly in ruins. He passed through a broken arch, and saw guns lying at random in the court. He examined the battlemented square, and entered what remained of the heavily-armed works. But there was nowhere any sign of a human being.

His search was conducted with extreme caution. With the same care he descended once more to his boat, pushed her off, and made for the opposite side, where he saw a stone-work outline against the sky. Here the ascent was steeper; he scrambled up a pebbly footpath, scraped through some scrub, and entered the fortification. There was less marked destruction on this than at the east fort. He examined scarp, and counterscarp, glacis, and donjon, and saw no one. Then he entered an inner court, where there was a low building with small, barred windows, the barracks and mess-room of the former garrison. And in three of the windows near the ground he saw light.

He fell to his hands and knees, and crept toward one of the openings. As he drew nearer he could hear a sound of laughter, and someone protesting in harsh gibberish. He knew now that he was among Chinese. But he continued to advance, eager to acquire some sort of knowledge of the facts of his situation. He reached the window, lifted his head, and peeped in.

The room which he saw was long, and surrounded by beds at regular intervals. On most of these lay Chinamen

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asleep, three only were intently playing some sort of dice-game at a table on which was a lantern.

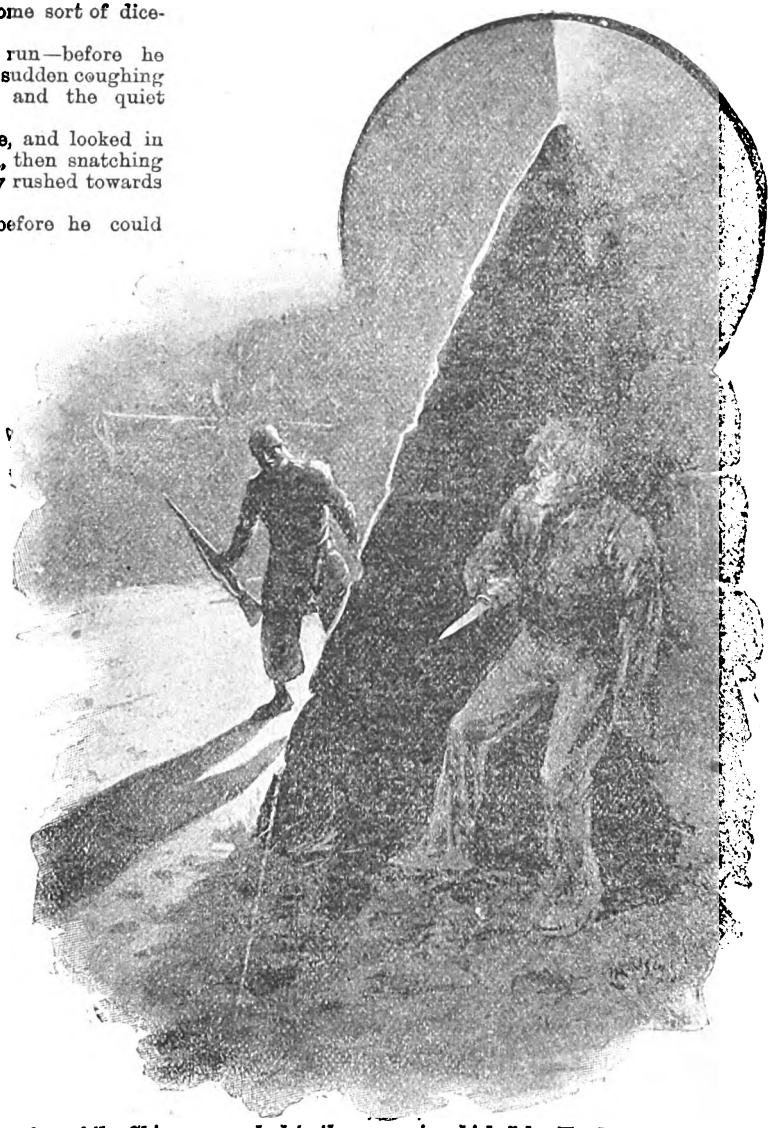
As Hardy looked—before he could run—before he could cover his mouth—he was seized by a sudden coughing which sounded through the still night and the quiet room.

The three Chinamen sprang up at once, and looked in amazement in the direction of the sound, then snatching three rifles, and making a great noise, they rushed towards the door.

Hardy, too, was off, running; but before he could cross the breadth of the yard, the three men were out of the door. At the moment, he was in the shadow of the buttress of a barbacan, and he knew that if he left it to cross the strip of moonlight which lay along the exit from the yard, he must be seen. He stood still, therefore, crouching in the deepest shade.

The three, in a state of great excitement, ran towards the spot which he had just left, and finding nothing, scattered through the small yard in flurried search about the deep embrasures of arches, and the black shade of turret or buttress. Their eager examination was disorganised, the second again scrutinising a spot which the first had just searched, and the third, perhaps, following suit.

It was all over in the space of certainly not more than a minute. One of the Chinamen rushed to the corner in which John Hardy crouched, his hands out groping, and in a few seconds he was followed by the second, and in a few seconds more by the third. And they dropped like a line of little wooden soldiers, upon which one blows obliquely, one after the other, stiffly, at full length. The knife which Ni-ching-tang had given to John Hardy was no sooner out of the first than it was in the second, and instantly afterwards in the third. Before the startled sleepers within had rubbed their eyes, sprung to their feet, and snatched their weapons, he had diminished the population of China by three. It was the first-fruits of his vengeance.



One of the Chinamen rushed to the corner in which John Hardy crouched.

Now, meantime, was his chance to run, and he ran. Thirty Chinese soldiers, however, were after him, and one saw him as he slipped through the exit from the inner to the outer court-yard. This man raised the hue and cry, and it became a question of running, first towards the outer exit, and secondly through the scrub, and down the steep hill-side, guns popping all the while, and the Chinamen screaming in an ecstasy of excitement.

Behind the rising ground, on the general level of the mainland, there was a camp of a half-regiment of the old regular army of China under the command of a Japanese lieutenant; and these, hearing the firing, quickly set off at the double up the gentle incline at the back of the fort.

John Hardy was saved from the shots of the thirty on the top of the plateau by doubling and bending among the scrub, but by the time he had plunged and scrambled to the bottom of the steep path, bullets were whistling round him. The moon, however, had now become obscured, and the riflemen, as they ran, shot at random.

There lay his boat, her prow just touching and swaying in the gravel. If he could push her off, and gain the shelter of the house-deck, he would be safe. Two of the Chinamen, however, who had not slackened their speed in order to shoot, were near upon him; and when he leapt to his bow, and put out the oar to shove off, one of them, and immediately the other, took hold of it. A short struggle ensued. One of the Chinamen, struck by a flying bullet in the nape, relaxed his hold and dropped; at the same time John Hardy's power of grasp failed, and the oar slipped from his grasp; but so suddenly that the pulling Chinaman slid on his heels, and fell backward into the surf. Hardy was quick to leap upon him, buried his knife in his bosom, regained the oar, and the next moment had the *Taku* afloat.

He hurried astern, trimmed the sail, and half sheltering himself under the deck, contrived to steer, making further up the harbour, where he now knew the island must be.

In a minute or two the boat became the aim of the three hundred or more additional rifles which had now arrived from the plain. They riddled her hull and sail, but she kept on her way till there came a tremendous boom of big

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Two men had him by the throat.

cannon from a quite unexpected quarter, and suddenly the splintered *Taku* dipped her bow, and disappeared in five fathoms of water.

The Chinese, apparently, had no heavy guns mounted ready for use at the fort, for they fired none; but the English had: and when the sentries reported a daring Chinese junk approaching the island, she was fired at; and she promptly sank, riddled by her foes, shattered by her friends.

In all the harbour of Kaio-Chau no Chinese craft had dared for weeks to appear.

Happily the outward bulge of the island was discernible at the moment when the *Taku* went down, and not more than 500 yards distant at its nearest point. John Hardy began to swim: The Chinese, astonished at the sinking by the white men of a boat containing a white man, ceased firing, though a wanton shot or two dropped about the swimmer.

Panting hard, he reached the rear point of the island, where a sparse growth of thin-trunked plane trees made a wood to the water's edge. And he had hardly trailed his dripping form out of the surf, when two men, springing from nowhere, had him by the throat, and he was on his back with a pistol at his temple.

John Hardy said to himself:

"They will do well."

And he added aloud:

"I am an Englishman."

There was a close scrutiny of his face, a chuckle, a few exclamations, and he was on his feet.

The search-light apparatus of the fort was out of order. Till he spoke, no one on the island had had the faintest suspicion of the truth.

In ten minutes he was in a lighted room, with nearly all the hundred and fifty gathered round him, hands on knees. There were far more questions than answers. Chatter, chatter went the tongue of Jack.

"But you have not told us, sir, who you are," said Murray.

"My name is John Hardy," he replied, "and I am come to China in search of my ship, the *Powerful*. Can you give me any news of her whereabouts?"

"Oh, Lord!" cried a young blue-jacket, George Liversey, "just hark at *that! Powerful*, is it? Why, sir, if you'd as much water in your inside to-night as the *Powerful's* got, you wouldn't be thinking about *Powerfuls*, I don't think."

"There has been a battle?"

"That there has, sir."

"Who won?"

"We did."

"By how many ships?"

"The one we came here in, and two the Japs sunk."

"The Japs?"

"Aye."

"They sunk some ships?"

"They did that."

"But they were our allies, were they not?"

"Funny allies at that."

"They gave you no warning of their real intentions, I'll be bound," said John Hardy.

"Not they," someone replied, "it was bash-into-'em, take-me-as-you-find-me-boys, and no mistake. They didn't even carry a flag."

"They have broken the law of nations," said Hardy, looking on the ground. Then, after a few seconds, as if musing, he added: "They have violated the Law of Man."

And the words, taken in conjunction with the most strange, grave face from which they came, had in them something so solemn, and judicial, and meaningful, that, for a minute or two, silence fell upon the men; and they looked at his bent form, somehow expecting him to utter something further of singular and momentous purport.

But he gazed on the ground and said nothing.

Already this grey-haired youth, this venerable stripling, had produced a profound impression upon them.

Somebody on the outskirts of the crowd whispered to somebody else:

"What a face he's got!"

And the whisper went round. And now it was: "Just look at the phiz of him;" and now it was: "I don't think he's all there;" and now it was: "Lor'! look at his face."

It was a face in which there was something thrillingly *wild*; the face not merely of a judge and an avenger; but of a judge and an avenger come back from the grave, with just that hint of the Ineffable which makes us shudder.

Yet he sat there simply enough, looking on the ground, with one elbow on his wet knee.

CHAPTER XXII.

Murray's Diary.

Mr. Murray, the nominal head of the crew at the fort—though in reality he was only the first among equals—on opening one of the chests brought from the *Iphigenia* in the pinnace, found a quantity of notepaper, and as there were pens and ink in the fort, he bound the notepaper in some brown paper, and sewed them together, wisely determining to keep a record of the varied days of this strangely-fated crew.

Under date June 8th we find as follows:

"June 8th.—Last night, near twelve, a strange thing happened. We sank a Chinese boat in the harbour with No. 3 south-bastion three-incher, thinking it an enemy. It proved to have contained an Englishman, named John Hardy, ship *Powerful* (as he says). He reports himself as

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from Pekin in search of ship. That's about all we can get from him at present. No explanation so far as to how he escaped death in long voyage through China. Something strange about him somewhere, and men pass astonished remarks.

"Still two sacks of rice left, last of third being used at dinner to-day. Also two hind legs of camel with quarters, three small sacks roots, two jars Chinese spirit from the millet-farm, and about a pound of tobacco. The sow, Joyce says, is near her confinement, and a day or two should bring us great things from her. Harris, Tom Brown, and Daly complain of fever, and Machen of violent headache. Otherwise all well. Tom Newton to be buried presently.

"June 9th.—Tom Newton buried last night at ten. For last message to his wife see under June 6. This morning noticed a considerable body of Chinese (guessed 500) march past on brow of hill east of island. Big dust-cloud ahead, looking like horse-artillery. Brassey says they mean to give us fight. But I disagree. Their game is to starve us out—if they can.

"This noon, Council. Resolved: that at midnight thirty hands should swim to mainland at different points, taking Sniders in waterproof bags, and ammunition. To meet near lake to N.E., and make a dash for probable mules on tea-farm, N. of lake. Long discussion of ways and means. Resolved: first volunteer to be leader. To surprise of all, the stranger, Hardy, volunteered first. Had listened to discussion without a word, turning from speaker to speaker. Is small and seems weak in chest. Sow doing well.

"June 10th.—This day cook, to surprise of all, produced pudding made of roots and honey, found, he says, near west stream in valley on island. First we heard of honey here, lads all wild with excitement, and everybody clapping cook on back. Am now smoking last pipe. Tobacco done. Also last of German coffee, and yesterday no more sugar. Lads hope for unlimited supplies of honey, but I rather doubtful. Not the right place even for the wild kind.

"Expedition last night very successful. Two mules (all there were on farm), also sack rice (brought over by pinnace), also a skin containing some sort of oil, and no one injured. Joyce says it is good for food, but Brassey denies, and the two came to blows. Lads came back speaking well of Hardy, some saying that he means more than he says.

"Most of day spent in washing shirts and sheets by hands. Harris and Brown still bad with fever, and now also Collins, but Daly better.

"He is an original, this man (I mean Hardy). To-day, while washing clothes, great discussion between Brassey and Davis, which nearly came to blows. Says Brassey, 'Why, the man is fifty-five,' he says, 'if he's a day.' Davis answers that he will lay to it that he is a lad of twenty-five, and not a day older. Then other hands join in, one saying this, and another that, and the lads getting warm. Hardy sitting a good way off, washing sheets. One says: 'Why not ask him, and settle the question?' But no one volunteers to do that. Everybody going to have a look at sow this afternoon, and plenty of bets. But nothing yet to report.

"June 11th.—Great excitement this morning, and all the Chinese liquor finished. Sow littered with four, and beauties all: one pinky-white, two pinky-white and black, and one pure black. The lads all ready for fun, and everybody determined to make a day of it. Hardy alone drank nothing. Brassey very rowdy, but afterwards got to sleep. One of mules refused to eat roots, and was killed in afternoon. A detachment of lads down by sea-shore cutting down trees for fire-wood with swords, and one hatchet. Not an adze in fort. Very slow business. Hardy recommended blasting, and this tried with success. But fearful anxiety beginning to be felt about powder and shot. Only three rounds of ammunition left to some of big guns, and no possibility apparently of making powder for ourselves. At six o'clock, Council. Resolved: to make a dash in small hours of morning for west fort in order to seize possible stores and ammunition, Hardy leading. Pinnace to take two detachments of twenty-five each. A desperate piece of business, in my opinion not yet necessary, but proposed by Hardy, who has seen fort, and seconded by lads. Search this afternoon for more honey, but without success. Men walking about with hands in pockets, without tobacco.

"June 12th.—Lovel, William Brown, and Jackson dead, and not less than thirty Chinese. I with bullet hole in my left hand, very painful. Result: two barrels of powder, and a green tea box half full of Lee-Metford magazine rifle cartridges. Half of us, in retreat, swam across harbour-mouth from west fort to east, Hardy among us. Then along east side of harbour by land, pursued by Chinese, and then, swimming again, to island. The toughest job we have done yet. Our guns, ammunition, and some of our clothes, meanwhile, in boat, with captured things, and we swimming with swords in our teeth.

"But the curious thing is this. As we walked toward our fort, the day began to break, and Hardy having on no shirt, we saw all his body in a queer bruised sort of mess, and two letters, quite distinct, an A, and an S, looking as if they had been branded into his right breast. He throws no light upon himself, and not one of us has pluck to ask him. It is clear that he is a gentleman, and it is 'sir this' and 'sir that' from all the lads to him.

"June 13th.—Says Brassey to me this noon, 'Wasn't there,' says he, 'something about a John Hardy in the battle of Shoreham that that collier from Perim reported to us at Hong Kong before we sailed north?' 'Yes,' I said, 'there was.' 'Then this,' says he, 'is the man.' 'There are many John Hardy's,' I said. 'But this,' says he, 'is the man.' 'What makes you think that?' I said. 'Everything,' says he. And he was so certain of it, that he partly made me so as well. He has gone whispering it, too, to all the lads, and they are talking it over amongst themselves. Nobody asks Hardy, but before this day is out, I mean to put the question straight before him. Gun cleaning pretty nearly all day, and Walters, who has been down to the water's edge on east side, reports that Chinese are heaping a lot of stones on edge of cliff, probably with intention of building. Let them build away. The four piggies doing well, and the old girl as pleased as punch. We shall never have the heart to kill them. Not a scrap of baccy, and no more honey.

"June 14th.—It is to be hoped that this Hardy is not come here to lead us all to the devil, but that is about what I suspect it is going to amount to. Time will show. He has a strong influence over lads, and is all for wild schemes and adventures. Says he last night, most of us sitting about in the north mess-room, 'But what,' says he, suddenly, 'are your ultimate aims?' 'Ultimate aims, sir?' says Brassey. 'You don't mean to live here always, I suppose?' says Hardy. 'It's enough for us to think of getting food to eat, without looking so far ahead,' says Martin Hall. 'Don't be a fool, Hall,' says Tom Brown; 'listen to what the gentleman says.' 'I have not *said* anything,' says Hardy, 'I merely ask a question, which I leave to your reflection. If you will think it over, I believe you will be wise. And if you cannot find an answer, come to me, and perhaps I may be able to help you.' He very seldom speaks, this Hardy, and when he does, the lads listen wonderfully to him. For quite five or six minutes, I suppose, not one spoke a word after he had said this. And now they are all saying that he's got some fine scheme in his head. This afternoon at five, Council. Resolved: That the Chinese preparations for building on cliff be investigated and destroyed, if necessary, between twelve and one to-night. Hardy proposed as an amendment: That an attack be at once made on Chinese village, three miles to S.E., for purpose of getting in large store of provisions in event of contingencies. But his voice overborne by seventy-five to seventy-three votes. This afternoon Day sent to wind octagonal clock in B

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bastion, and broke main-spring. Have not asked Hardy anything about battle of Shoreham, or marks on chest, but mean to, sooner or later.

"June 15th.—This day extraordinary scene at Council. It seems that Brassey, with five or six others, came to Hardy about noon, a sort of deputation, telling him that the men had been thinking over his words of two nights before, and were wanting him to summon a council and say what was on his mind. Hardy says yes, he would, as they wanted it. So about four, Council. Hardy stands up, the lads sprawling all about, on benches, on the floor, looking at him. Hardy has in his hand one of the three Bibles from the *Iphigenia* third chest. Well, everybody waits, wondering now what is coming. Hardy begins to talk, and keeps on talking for half-an-hour. All about himself first; his family, where he was born, everything; then about his coming to China to seek *Powerful*, and his capture by the Chinese at Pekin. Suddenly off he tears his shirt, and shows wounds and scars all over body; and he points to the grey patches in his head: Chinese torture, he says; some of the men wiped their eyes, so movingly he spoke.

"Sometimes when his face is animated, I declare he looks like a lad of nineteen, and it is hard not to love this man somehow. Then he went on to speak of the Japs and their treachery to the British ships; then he said that all the white men in China had been massacred by the Chinese; and last of all, he came out with the announcement that the Chinese and Japanese combined are about to attack Europe. Everyone held his breath at this, and we were all pretty excited by now. 'Well, what are we to say of such a race, men?' says Hardy. 'Do you not agree with me that the earth would be well rid of such a people?' 'Yes!' we cry, 'yes! yes!' we all shout out. 'As for me,' he says, 'I, here and now, before you all, and before Almighty God, devote my entire life henceforth to their destruction; and I invite you all to take that oath with me.' And so saying he lifts the Book, and kisses it. The men leapt round him at once.

"One cries out: 'You are the John Hardy of the Shoreham battle, aren't you?' Hardy says, 'Yes.' Then Brassey roars out: 'Will you be our leader?' and every man jack of us cheers this to the echo; and then Hardy hands the Book to each of us, and as we kiss it, we each of us grips his hand in token of obedience to his orders. And as the last of us grips his hand (that was Paddy Burke), Hardy, turning away from us, goes leaning out of window, and Brassey says a tear was rolling down his cheek which he wanted to hide. I suppose there never was such a scene in the world; it was just as if we were all mesmerised by him, some of us wanting to cry, and I as moved by his influence as the rest. The lads are swearing to follow Hardy through thick and thin.

"The expedition last night did nothing, and discovered little. There were merely some piles of stone and two carts, but without mules. In one of the carts a hard-backed land-turtle, which lads brought back. But their climb up that steep hill as good as useless. From their report it is probable that the regular Chinese force in the neighbourhood is being increased. Happily, perhaps, for us, this is a thinly populated part of the country. Something will have to be done for food, and that soon. It remains to be seen what sort of stuff this Hardy is made of. No one can deny that we got on pretty fairly before he came. Heat fearful to-day, but rain now pouring in torrents outside.

"June 16th.—At midday-mess Hardy says to lads: 'don't scatter, men. I wish to talk with you at once;' so immediately after meal, Council. Hardy at head of table, I on right, Brassey on left, Tom Brown, Davis and Joyce sitting near. Says Hardy: 'You have been good enough,' he says, 'to choose me for your leader. I hope to prove myself worthy of your favour, but for the present I prefer to consult with you, rather than to give you orders. Here we are, a splendidly trained set of fellows, and Britons — 148 of us.

"'I believe we might be able to do something more for our country and ourselves than killing a few Chinamen now and then. The thing is to know what we want to do, and to set about it in the right way; and, as a rule the right way is sure to be the simplest way.' 'Hear, hear,' says Brassey, who is a regular champion of Hardy's, and everybody gives a nod at somebody else. 'Well, then,' says Hardy, 'but no man can work without Tools, and every workman should stick to his own Tool, the carpenter to his chisel, and the blacksmith to his sledge. We, men, are Sailors; and the Tool of a Sailor is a Ship. What we have got to do, then, is to get a Ship.'

"This went straight to the lads—he spoke so sweetly and simply to the understanding of everybody. We cheered, every man, though not a soul could guess where this ship was to come from, or what we were to do with it when we got it. But the mere fact of his saying it made the thing seem possible.

"'A ship, then,' goes on Hardy; 'any sort of ship, so long as we've got our Tool to work with. And you mustn't think that I am child enough to propose to you anything that is impossible for you to do. I have studied you carefully since I have been among you, and I know what each of you can do, and what the whole of you together can do, and what you cannot do. As for ships, they are lying round you in plenty, only waiting for you to go and take one.'

"Everybody looked at him in surprise at this.

"'Ships, sir,' said Brassey, 'whereabouts?'

"'All round the Chinese coasts,' says Hardy. 'I told you, didn't I, that the Chinese have seized and massacred in a body all the Europeans they could find in China. Well, at the time of the massacre, there were, of course, merchant ships of all nations in every Chinese port, and you may be sure that the Chinese took special care to overpower and secure the sailors on board these ships, lest they should escape home and tell what the Chinese were up to. Meanwhile, the ships themselves remain, probably quite empty, or perhaps with a few Chinese on board in charge. I myself saw five in Tientsin harbour when I sailed down the Peiho to come here, and there did not seem to be anybody on board. So you see we have plenty of ships, and to spare.'

"'But,' said I, 'how are you to get to them?'

"'In the pinnace,' says Hardy.

"'The pinnace can't carry even a quarter of us,' said I.

"'Then she shall carry half a quarter of us,' said he; 'and the rest of you will remain here till we come for you in the ship.'

"'But how are the rest of us to live without the pinnace?' said I. 'We can't carry bags of rice on our backs across the harbour, sir.'

"'I know that very well,' says he, 'and that is why I proposed to you the day before yesterday to make a raid on a village, instead of going to search into what the Chinese are building, which does not immediately concern us. What we have to do, in the first place, is to get in a good stock of provisions by means of a series of bold and well-planned raids into the thinly-populated country round, first crushing the small Chinese battalion, if necessary; and when we have enough stores both for us who go, and you who remain, then, and not before, some of us will set off in the pinnace. That seems to me good sense.'

"'And to me!' cries Brassey, with a wave of the hand, 'and to me,' goes the cry down the benches.

"'But,' said I, 'when we have got our ship, what do we do with her—go home?'

"'No—that is not precisely what we swore to do,' says Hardy. 'As to what we will do with our ship, I have got a plan which I feel confident you will approve when I lay it before you. But there is a good deal to be done first, and I won't trouble you with that now. The first thing I want every man here to set his mind upon is to bring me into the fort here a live Chinaman with two sound legs. Without that nothing can be done.'

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"At this our astonishment knew no bounds. A live Chinaman!

"'And may I ask, sir,' said I, 'what it is you want a live Chinaman for?'

"'To send him on a message,' says he. 'It is the answer which he will bring back which will make our ship of any use to us.'

"'He won't come back,' said I.

"'He will,' says he.

"'Right you are, sir!' cries Brassey.

"'I will not keep you any longer now,' says Hardy. 'But later in the day, I will select a hundred of you to come with me to-night; and I recommend you to look to your swords and your rifles.'

"And with that we broke up, everyone forming part of a group to discuss our new man. The second mule killed to-day, and two more of our men complaining of fever trouble. Joyce talking of blowing up tortoise with gunpowder, and saying that they are good food in South Seas. Lads conversing about different brands of tobacco, and smelling keg."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Murray's Diary (continued).

"June 17th.—Harvey, Lane, Yates and Tom Joyce dead, Brassy wounded in leg, Harry Jones in leg, Field in shoulder, Burke in forearm, Mackay in forearm, Wright in groin, and I again in left hand near the old place—my bad luck. One or two wounds look ugly, but the rest not much. Bodies of Harvey, Yates, and Joyce with Chinese, but Lane brought back, and died in fort. Burial to-day at 3. 'Not less than fifty Chinese done for,' says Brassey. Result: splendid haul of three camels (one killed in battle, and carcase left behind), seven mules, twelve small animals like sheep, two sacks millet, and five rice. Returning loaded from village, met Chinese battalion cutting us off. Made quick charge, and thought they would turn tail, but didn't. Sharp fight. Literally forced our way through them. But our powder getting very low. What shall we do? Lads very well pleased with expedition, and speak well of Hardy. He proposes that one of mules be set aside for drawing one of Chinese carts on top of hill, to bring home hawl on next expedition. But mules won't eat roots, have to be fed on rice, and grass on island scanty. Hardy says salted mule-meat. Weather is very hot for this. But will be tried. No live Chinaman to be got. They know how to run, these Chinese. At four, Council. Resolved: to repeat raid this night on village, N.W. by N., six miles off, according to report of Fraser and Brassey. Hardy looking far from well."

"The lasso falls clean over Chinaman's head."

[Here follows Murray's account of three fresh raids, too minutely described to be reproduced here, and conducted with varying success. In the last of the three Hardy did not join, being ill.]

"June 21st.—At last, live Chinaman. Captured at high noon. Five lads, among them Hardy, swam one by one to east side, diving most of time. On cliff some Chinamen pouring stones out of carts for building. Men, hiding in scrub, climb up cliff-side, no very easy matter with weapons and other things in hands. Peep over cliff-edge, and decide which Chinaman it is to be. Then rush out. Chinese off in their mule-carts, and a squad of soldiers, some distance off, give fire, but at random, being taken unawares. As marked Chinaman turns to gallop off in mule-cart, Brassey, who has lasso, throws; and lasso falls clean over Chinaman's head, dragging him from cart, which gallops off alone. Splendid feat for Brassey, for Chinaman was not near, and Brassey has wounded leg. Chinaman quickly bound, and hustled down hill-side. Pinnace waiting at shore to bring lads and Chinaman, and Chinamen a-top still banging away. But no one hurt. Lads say that Hardy gripped Brassey's hand, and gave it a squeeze. It's like Hardy's decent way. Chinaman being very kindly treated by Hardy's orders. A brawny, raw-boned brute, and seems not to know what to make of treatment.

"June 22nd.—To-day at one, Council. Resolved: That sufficient stores now in fort to last all two weeks, and that pinnace starts as soon as Chinaman is sent on message. Resolved: That Chinaman be sent to-morrow, Hardy wishing him to grow accustomed to kind treatment before starting. Hardy has chosen to accompany him on voyage the following: — Brassey, Tom Brown, Fraser, Burke, Knollys, Leaf, Pawsons, John Jones, Maitland, Samuels, Clayton, Rogers, Machen, Gibbs, John Pound, Maunder, Chapman, and Glyn. I remain in charge. Practically no powder will be left when lads set out. To-day overhawling of pinnace, and preparations. Lads found some opium on Chinaman, which they smoked, and some of them still very queer.

"June 23rd.—To-day great fun, and lads talking of sagacity of Hardy. But no one understands meaning of message. Chinaman brought before Hardy after mid-day meal. Hardy at table, with pen, ink, and paper. We all standing round, Chinaman looking queer. Hardy looks at him and says: 'You talkee English?' Chinaman makes no sign. 'Can you talkee English?' No sign. Up jumps Hardy on a sudden, a razor in his hand, and he seizes hold of Chinaman's pig-tail, as if to cut it off. 'Oh, savee, savee,' cries Chinaman. 'Very good,' says Hardy, 'you talk English, then.' Hardy had guessed beforehand that he could, because Chinaman, on day of capture, had on European felt hat like those some of the Chinese boatmen wear at Shanghai; and that was why Hardy had singled

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out this particular Chinaman for capture. 'Well,' Hardy says: 'You poor man?' 'Me very poor,' says Chinaman. 'How much you give for one silk pig-tail?' says Hardy. 'Fifty tael,' says Chinaman. 'You got fifty tael to buy one pig-tail?' says Hardy. Chinaman looks scared. 'Fifty tael?' says he, 'no, no.' 'All right,' says Hardy, 'me going to cut off your pig-tail, and me going to give you letter to carry Pekin. You carry letter well, and bring back true answer soon, me promise to give you back pig-tail, and no do you any harm. You understand?' Chinaman trembling like a sail in the wind. But he says 'yes.' Hardy says: 'Very good.' Then he turns round to paper, tears half a sheet, and begins to write, lads looking over his shoulder. He writes:

"'To Ni-ching-tang, Imperial City, Pekin.

"'You tell me quick where Japanese navy is, or me very

Chinaman spied on east shore of mainland, making signals.

likely get caught, and then me tell Yen How who set me free. If you can write, you write name of place where navy is on this paper, and also name of your nephew at Tungchow, so that me may be sure the answer comes from you. If you no can write, you tell this man name of place, and name of nephew. Be quick, or me get caught, and tell Yen How about you.—John Hardy.'

"When Hardy had finished this letter, he read it aloud to Chinaman, and gave it to Chinaman. He said 'If you no be back in nine days from now, me burn your pigtail in fire, and you no have pigtail no more.' And with that, up he jumped to his feet, and wrapping pigtail round left hand, with two sweeps of razor he had it off about three inches from the root, leaving just enough for the man to plait it on to again. Chinaman curled and shivered, as though razor was in his flesh, and a fine long pigtail it is, too. Hardy then wrote name of Ni-ching-tang's nephew, by which I am to verify that Chinaman really has been to Ni-ching-tang, and handed paper to me to keep. Nephew's name is Li-kien. If Ni-ching-tang cannot read, Chinaman will deliver message verbally. It is clear that this man Ni-ching-tang has some strong motive for telling real truth to Hardy, but we none of us know what motive is, nor why Hardy is anxious about station of Japanese fleet. However, we have much confidence in his views. Chinaman was let free, and taken to mainland, and much fun we all had. Pinnace now ready, and the nineteen men to start at midnight Nearest treaty-port, according to map, is Chefoo. And to Chefoo they mean to go. Pinnace loaded with last coal in fort. Compass, sextant, chronometer, stores, and everything we can think of on board. Weather stifling hot, but lads in good spirits.

"June 24th.—Lads, apparently, got out of harbour all right last night. For us here the game is a waiting one. After to-morrow, by Hardy's orders, a man to be always on the look-out near the east fort during night. If lads get a ship she will show three lights in a triangle to let us know when she comes. They will send boats ashore to east headland, to take us off, we swimming to east side of harbour, and taking all live stock still left. If Chinaman not come back by the time Hardy returns, nothing to be done, and red light to be shown by sentry to ship. This day killed the sow. The lads yawning, and spoiling for a fight."

[Six days of the diary follow, containing nothing but trivial details of the life of the fort, and the account of a massing of some two thousand Chinese in the locality. The next entry of importance is on the 1st July.]

"July 1st.—This day at noon, Chinaman spied on east shore of mainland, making signals. Great excitement among lads, who have been dull. Sent two men to fetch Chinaman over, and the fuss that beggar made about coming into water lasted nearly an hour. At last lads managed to bring him over between them. Chinaman handed me Hardy's note to Ni-ching-tang, and underneath, in English characters, just legible, were the words 'Nagasaki' and 'Li-kien.' It is clear, then, that Chinaman did his work well, and the only thing open to doubt is whether Ni-ching-tang has told the truth in saying that Jap navy is at Nagasaki. Chinaman trembling with eagerness to get back pig-tail, doubting apparently that we would keep our word, and the lads having great sport in making him think that we wouldn't. Pig-tail produced at last, and lads lashing one another with it all over the place, to Chinaman's agony. Then pig-tail given to Chinaman to his great joy. But I don't think it prudent to let him go free, and am keeping him prisoner for some time.

"July 2nd.—Some lads sent out to scout report continued massing of Chinese tents on plain to S. W., 1,500 counted, and we here without the power of firing three rounds of shot. Heaven only grant that Hardy turns up trumps. The men seem to take him with perfect confidence, and the lapse of time makes no difference to them. It is wonderful to me how thoroughly Hardy has got over them. I never saw anything like it. The two hind quarters of sow completely spoiled owing to heat, and the men all saying it is head cook's fault, and he very sulky."

[On July 3rd there is no entry.]

(To be continued.)

"Pick-Me-Up."

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The Man Who Kills.

On a plain white slab in the dreary little cemetery of St. Jeane de Dieu, at Longue Pointe, Canada, are chisled these words: "*L'homme qui tue.*"

There are many resting there whose life was more eventful than his, but only numbers mark their graves, and they share the one big wooden cross, near the fence, in common.

Look at number twenty-three, for instance. It contains the remains of the beautiful Madame Réal, who kept the fashionable millinery shop in the Rue Ste. Catherine. She was wealthy, but had only enough left when her husband died to stock her establishment. One day she fell in love with Beaulieu, the rich hardware man, whose wife was plain and insipid, but rich. For three short years she was as happy as she could be, and then he became tired of her, and one Friday evening told her that he would see her no more. On Saturday morning she was violently insane.

Number fourteen was a distinguished officer in His Holiness's Foreign Legion during the Italian war for independence from religious power. He learnt the opium habit at Vancouver and cut his throat.

Number forty-five was a high Government official, who murdered his wife and three daughters during an attack of jealousy brought on by paresis—at that time not the fashionable disease it is at present. And so on.

Yet he is the only one that has a stone to cover him, and I had it put there myself and had the inscription cut at his own request.

Did he ever kill anyone? No, but he imagined he did, and to me, like him, that is pretty much the same thing.

He was a bright fellow. I know this because I went to school with him, and he loved the daughter of his uncle, the rich wholesale liquor merchant, Laframboise. Indirectly she was the cause of the whole sad history. His parents were dead and Laframboise brought him up. He was good to the boy, better than most uncles in similar circumstances, but later on he aspired to the Council Législatif, that strange mixture of modern politics and Louis XVI. manners, with hopes of Ottawa and the Senate. In such cases a man that would not sacrifice a cousin or nephew cannot expect to possess the confidence of a paternal Government. But I am running ahead of my story.

His name was Calixe, hers Louise. Her pet name was "Mouton" on account of her big, brown eyes and her easy temper—too easy and soft for the good of either of them. He had hair like that of an Indian, but softer and wavy, and a spirit to match. They were always together, and their callow love as children gradually transformed itself into the more presumptuous passion of young manhood and womanhood. French-Canadian children are very precocious in matters of that kind. Laframboise *père* never seemed to notice this, but when "Mouton" was sixteen, he decided that a certain red-cushioned arm-chair in the Legislative Council Chamber would be just the thing for him, and, as it was a Castor Government, it might be well to have a relative in the ranks of the clergy. So Calixe was told that as his uncle could not afford the expenses of the legal education first thought of, he had better go to the Grand Seminary, unless he wished to shift for himself.

Calixe was not a fool. He knew his uncle, and prepared to obey. The next time Louise came home from the convent he told her.

"Uncle wants me to be a crow," he said.

Strange how fast Catholic children in those days lost their reverence for the cloth.

"A crow!" exclaimed Louise, aghast, as she thought of fat Père Gonzaque, one of the confessors to the convent, who, she sometimes thought, tried to flirt with the bigger girls. "And what will become of me?"

"Don't fret, *ma petite* Louise," said Calixe, in the tone of authority he often assumed with her, and that made her think him so grand and wise. "You and I will get married after all."

"But crows cannot marry." Louise said tearfully.

"Of course not, silly; but I am not going to be one. My plans are not quite matured, but to please uncle I'll go to the seminary for a year or so, and then cut for the United States, and when I'm earning enough I will send for you, and you'll come. Won't you?"

"I will," said Louise, and they kissed one another and everything was settled. But children propose and guardians dispose, and Calixe had only been about a month at the seminary when his uncle told Louise to prepare herself for a visit to her aunt in Paris. When Calixe's next half-day off came, there was another consultation. The old gentleman never interfered with these. He knew better.

This time it was Louise that spoke first. "I am going to Paris," she said.

"Why?" he asked; "are not Canada and I good enough for you?"

"Oh, yes, too good, but papa wants me to go. There are social advantages in a trip like that, he says, that I must not miss."

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Calixe thought for awhile. He knew that Louise's soft nature would never summon courage enough to oppose her father's wishes. So he just pulled her down upon the sofa alongside of him. "Louise, *chérie*," he said, putting his arm round her, "it seems that we must part, but, at any rate, we can swear to be true to one another."

"Do you doubt me?" Louise asked, in an injured tone.

"No, *chérie*," he replied; "but it would please me to hear you swear it. All you have to do is to put your hand on the big crucifix and to repeat what I say, and then kiss the crucifix."

"All right," she said, "if it pleases you." So they swore. It did not seem such a terrible oath after all. He said: "I promise to love none but you, and marry none but you, or you may kill me." And she repeated it after him, only she felt a little shiver when she came to the killing part. They both kissed the crucifix on the same spot.

"Now, nothing can part us," he said. He repeated this when he kissed her good-bye on the steamer. They arranged that he should write her once a week, and that she should answer all his letters promptly. When he left the seminary and obtained work that would pay sufficiently, she would come to him, no matter what happened. He carried out his part of the programme well enough, but after writing once a week for two or three months without a single reply, he became disheartened. His next day off he spoke to his uncle about having written her—he did not say how often—without receiving any reply.

"She is too busy, my boy, with balls and parties and cavaliers," Laframboise *père* had replied. The last expression hurt Calixe deeply, but his uncle was too busy to think about such little things. Calixe waited for a whole year. He did not know that his letters never reached Louise.

He did some very disreputable things for a theological student. He used bad language, when alone, and finally turned to revenge for consolation. Nothing mean or petty, but a noble reckoning up of grievances was his aim! He would be a celebrated preacher, and from the pulpit he would denounce the women who by breaking their vows imperilled the souls of men.

He worked as only a young man possessing his iron constitution could. Gradually he managed to cast her from his thoughts, and even the announcement of her engagement to the rich Vicomte de Bergère left him comparatively unmoved. When they were married he became a priest, and when Madame de Bergère and her husband, who intended to risk some of his money in an attempt to make sugar out of Canadian beets, set foot on Madame's native soil, his reputation as a preacher was established.

It was at Nôtre Dame de Lourdes that the couple first attended mass after their arrival.

It was as much of a surprise to Calixe to find, when he mounted the pulpit, that they were among the congregation, as it was to Madame de Bergère to hear his voice. The interior of the church was dim, and at first she did not recognise him, but when he spoke she felt a cold thrill go through her, and if her husband had not been listening so intently he would have noticed her cheek pale. Calixe spoke from the Book of Judges. His text was from the story of Samson's fall: "She made him sleep upon her knees, and she called a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head, and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him." He had his sermon well prepared in his mind, but the sight of her aroused him and crowded the first thought out, and he preached such a stirring extemporaneous sermon as that congregation had never heard.

It ended thus: "Women beware! The souls of men are priceless things. The number of souls of women lost through the perfidy of men does not begin to compare with the number of men's souls cast frivolously into the eternal, hopeless darkness of the bottomless pit, by the capricious faithlessness of women.

"Not the outcast creatures of the street, but the women to whom we daily doff our hat—the women that grace our salons—the fond mothers, the loving wives. Like Delilah, they captivate him with their smiles, enslave him with their eyes, intoxicate him with a pressure of the hand, and make him lose his senses through a kiss. And all this only to surrender to his enemies, despair and recklessness, that quickly drive him to the torments of Hades."

He spoke directly at her and she felt it, and when mass was over she had to be driven home, for her husband saw she was ill.

For a week that sermon was in everyone's mouth, and afterwards it was forgotten, for the next Sunday he preached one stronger and more eloquent. This time his text was: "And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." He saw that Madame de Bergère was not there, and he did not care, for he knew that people would tell her about it.

Thus he kept on for a month, when a celebrated Franciscan took his place. Every Sunday the attendance in the church had increased, but when the Franciscan had preached twice it fell off again and Calixe came back to the pulpit.

After that first sermon Madame de Bergère had been attacked by nervous prostration, which seemed to grow worse while Calixe preached, and Dr. Malo ordered a change of air. The trip did her good, and in her absence Calixe paid a formal visit to her husband.

When she came back he was preaching again, and she began to grow worse. Though fearing to hear, she had a sort of fatal desire to know what he said, and always managed to find someone among her many visitors that was only too glad to talk about the magnificent sermons of the young preacher, who kept himself so quiet and secluded. She knew they were meant for her alone, and she became no better.

In the meantime Calixe's fame grew. The women idolised and the men admired him. Laframboise *père* was pleased. He was aware also that his daughter was ill, but the duties of the Legislative Councillor are many and heavy, and he had given her husband the address of the best doctor in town.

One day, however, there was straw in front of the fine house in the Rue Ste. Marie, and the bell had been taken off. Madame de Bergère was dangerously ill. She had been delirious, and in her delirium she had repeated parts of the Bible over and over again. Sometimes she had mumbled about an oath and about someone that was coming to kill her. But they had only given her a soothing drink and waited for the doctor. The Legislative Councillor had for the moment become the father again and hovered anxiously about the sick-room. In the evening Dr. Malo put in an appearance. He was an advanced sort of a physician. He did not feel her pulse, but took out a little thermometer and put it into her mouth. Then he

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took it out again, looked at it, carefully wiped it with his pocket-handkerchief and replaced it in his leather *étui*. Everything was still in the room except the beautiful woman in the bed, who, half-unconscious, moved about recklessly.

The doctor spoke. "This is the crisis," he said.

"Will she live?" father and husband asked as with one subdued voice.

"She may," said the doctor; "she is young and strong."

"Better send for a priest," murmured the nun that acted as nurse.

The father looked at the doctor.

"I would not advise it," said Dr. Malo, in reply to the look. "The excitement might rob her of her only chance of life. I do not look for her death so soon as to prevent that being done later on." Doctor Malo was a good Christian as doctors go nowadays, and a good churchman; but he believed a live Catholic worth a thousand dead ones.

"But suppose she were to die," whispered the nun again.

"It would be horrible." The husband seemed to side with the doctor, but the Legislative Councillor asserted himself again over the father. It would be horrible. It would surely wreck his prospects. "We must be prepared for the worst," he said. "Let us have a priest by all means. Send for Calixe."

Dr. Malo shrugged his shoulders and walked into the next room. He had done all he could do. They were good clients and could afford to await developments. Had they asked his opinion then, he would have made a wager of a hundred to one that she was going to die.

Calixe was sent for! When the message reached him he said nothing, but put on his hat and coat, gave the host in its black bag to the messenger to carry, and went out.

They had washed her hands and feet for the anointment and were just preparing a little table near the bed, when the door creaked and Calixe entered. He had left his hat and coat in the hall. His face was terribly pale, and his hair seemed twice as black as usual. As he approached the bed firmly and solemnly the sick woman looked up. The noise of the door opening must have roused her from her stupor. As she saw the young priest approaching, she threw up her arms as if to ward him off. "Take him away," she cried, "take him away. He has come to kill me," and she fell back on her pillows. Calixe paused, trembling from head to foot, but it was only a momentary tremor. Dr. Malo rushed out of the next room past him to the bed. He regarded her critically.

"She is going to die," he said; "I can do nothing more," and he left the house.

Calixe, paler than before, administered the last sacrament.

It is a grandly solemn ceremony in the abstract. To me it has always appeared horrible in reality. It seems like the irrevocable avowal that all hope is gone, the signing of the death-warrant, the preparation of a condemned prisoner for the scaffold.

Three days afterwards the interior of the church of Nôtre Dame de Lourdes was hung with yellow and black. Calixe officiated at the service of the dead.

The next afternoon he walked into my house and told my housekeeper he was going to dine with me. He hung his hat and coat in the hall and then began to unbutton his soutane, and would have taken that off also if she had not stopped him.

"All right," he said, and went into the parlour to look at the flowers. The housekeeper was afraid of her life, but fortunately I came home soon after. She told me of his strange actions, and I went into the parlour. When I shook hands with him, he said: "I am hungry and want some dinner." As it was about ready we sat down, and though he would not take anything but bread-and-water, he talked very sensibly. Once he stopped.

"I want that dinner all over again," he said, "and I want to begin with chicken soup." I asked him to wait until supper time, as the cook was very busy, and he said: "All right, I will take a bath instead." That settled it. I sent the girl for Dr. Malo. When he arrived, he looked at Calixe and made a motion with his lips that meant "Crazy!" As he went up to my friend, Calixe warned him off, and said, like a man that tells you that a door is newly painted:

"Take care. I am the man who kills."

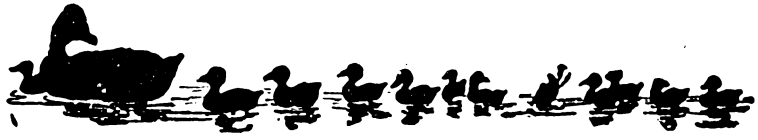
That remained his *idée fixe* all through his stay at the asylum. I was about the only one he allowed near him.

One day when I visited him he took me aside. "When I am dead and buried," he said, pointing to the floor, "I don't want people to come near me, I might hurt them. Put a stone over me, and cut on the stone in black letters, '*L'homme qui tue*'; it will be a warning."

He has been dead seven years.

The Vicomte de Bergère, after having lost half his fortune in the beetroot sugar industry, has married again. At least, Senator Laframboise, with whom I dined yesterday, told me so.

PETER PARE.



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A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge. During the sitting of a council appointed by the Pope to decide which of the King's two wives is his lawful consort, Montruel visits Mahmoud-el-Reis to urge him to fulfil his promise to murder Ingeburge without delay. In order to gain access to the Queen's presence, the two men arrange that Mahmoud shall feign sickness and be taken to the hospital attached to the Abbey, where the Queen is confined.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Patient for Prior Anselm.

Paris continued in a state of wild excitement during the first day of the great Ecclesiastical Council, and the crowds increased rather than diminished as the day wore on. Everyone thronged to the Palace Square, and there were many who had travelled all night from their country homes in order to glean the earliest intelligence of the all-important verdict.

The vast crowd waited patiently through the long weary hours, whose flight was only marked by the chiming bells from the neighbouring belfries, and still the great door remained closed. Human nature does not alter very much, and there were then, as there are to-day, fertile brains ready to divert the mob and gain a fleeting glory for themselves by the manufacture of startling items of information as to what was going on behind those closed doors. These romancers coloured their pictures according to their own fancy, but in no case was a single detail wanting as to the exact nature of those secret proceedings. The very words spoken in the recesses of the Council Chamber were repeated glibly by those who had never been within a hundred yards of the Palace steps. Some said the King had defied the Holy Father, and bidden his minions do their worst. Others, that the craven churchmen had been terrorized by the King's valiant body-guard; while the more pacific newsmongers had described Philip Augustus kneeling humbly before the assembled prelates, and assuring them of his penitent resolve to abide by the decision of Holy Church, whatever it should cost him. So the tongues wagged, and the crowd listened more or less incredulously, amused, horrified, incensed, as the case might be; but one and all deeply interested.

So absorbing were these contradictory and ever-recurring reports, that the crowd had little time to notice the fact that a litter was being carried, with considerable difficulty, through the thronged streets by four masons, followed by a knight on horseback, who seemed to direct their movements.

Those who recognised Amaury Montruel in the horseman suspected foul play as a matter of course; but it seemed only too probable that the litter contained some poor man who had fallen from the scaffolding of Nôtre Dame. One circumstance, however, would certainly have attracted attention had the lookers-on been less preoccupied, and that was the fact that, whenever the bearers prepared to halt before the door of a monastery or lazare-house, the knight motioned them to proceed, saying peremptorily:

"I will stop you at the right time and place."

The last orders of Jean Cador had been fulfilled to the letter. Montruel had called the first masons he could find, and had asked four of them to assist him. Three of the men shook their heads gravely on entering the shed where lay the apparently lifeless form of the famous sculptor.

"It's no good taking him to a hospital," said one of them; "the poor chap wants a coffin, not a bed, to lie in."

The fourth man knelt down beside the body and gazed at it with an agonised expression of doubt and fear upon his face, but he rose without saying a word, and was the first to bring a stretcher in obedience to Montruel's order.

When they were once fairly on the way, the three men relapsed into that subdued state of semi-indifferent sorrow which marks those who are brought face to face with a tragic occurrence that does not personally concern them, but the fourth bearer was still pale, and his eyes wandered restlessly through the crowd, as if seeking one whom they could

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not find. He looked like a man oppressed by a weighty secret which he yearned to confide to one who was not forthcoming.

Just before they reached the densest part of the crowd near the Palace, where the chattering groups were excitedly repeating the latest rumour to each other and jostling shoulder to shoulder in good-humoured idleness, this pale youth with the strained, anxious look in his eyes, caught sight of a white-haired old man, standing on the outskirts of the crowd, listening to the gossip.

The young man's face cleared and he called out.

"Christian, *mon père* Christian, come here a minute!" The old man turned round at the evidently familiar voice, and came towards the litter. Amaury Montruel saw the greeting, though he was too far off to catch the words, and felt instinctively that danger threatened his plans. He tried to spur his horse forward so as to intercept the meeting, but the throng was too great, and he only arrived in time to see the old man disappear in the crowd.

The young man had whispered hurriedly to his friend:

"The man in this litter is going to assassinate Queen Angel!" but as the words were spoken in the Norse tongue they conveyed no meaning to the bystanders.

This fourth bearer was Eric, the Dane, who had come from his northern home to save the life of Queen Ingeburge. He had never forgotten Imila's prophecy, nor the strange events of the night he and his sister had arrived in Paris. Ever since he had begun work at Nôtre Dame he had set a strict watch on the man so clearly defined by the prophecy, the man who bore the dual character of the Moslem, Mahmoud-el-Reis, and the Christian sculptor, Jean Cador, employed to carve the statue of the Holy Virgin.

The noise which had caused Montruel to rush to the window, during the last conversation with the Syrian that morning, had been made by Eric, who had climbed up the scaffolding, and was crouching under the window, so that he had heard every word spoken by the two men inside the shed. At the name of his beloved princess he had started so violently as to loosen a small piece of stone with his foot, and he had only just time to slide down one of the poles

Long and earnestly did the two men talk.

before Montruel's head was thrust out of the window above him.

The awful knowledge that he now possessed stunned him, for his will was better than his brain, and he felt powerless to act alone in this terrible emergency. He would have given ten years of his life to have had Eve beside him, for her quick wit and ready intelligence had helped them out of many a dilemma on their memorable journey. It was she who had cheered, consoled, and planned, while he bore the physical discomforts so far as he could in her stead. She had the mind, he had the muscle.

It was now the eighth day since she had been taken away from him. Every moment he could spare from his work had been spent in anxious and, so far, fruitless search for some trace of her whereabouts, but he had not obtained the slightest clue to her fate, and even had failed to come across the page Albret, who alone could have given him tidings. His heart had been daily growing heavier with the protracted suspense, and his fears for her safety were becoming more and more confirmed as no word of her reached him.

Now, when death seemed hanging over the head of the one they were both pledged to serve, his longing for his sister became almost unbearable.

When they had borne the litter over the great bridge which led to the palace, they made no halt till they reached the Porte-aux-Peintres, where Montruel, raising his visor, bade the guards open "In the King's name."

Montruel, raising his visor, bade the guards open "In the King's name."

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As soon as they were outside the walls, he rode ahead, and stopping before the heavy gate of the Abbey St. Martin, rang the great bell, and demanded audience with the Prior.

When Anselm came out, his haughty visitor requested that a private cell should be given to the celebrated sculptor, Maître Jean Cador, who had had the misfortune to be taken ill while carving the image of the Holy Virgin. It was the King's pleasure that the sick man should be tended in the Abbey St. Martin.

The venerable Prior bowed in acquiescence, and calling four of the lay brethren, bade them take the litter into the hospital.

Montruel waited till the doors had closed upon Mahmoud-el-Reis, and then, setting spurs to his horse, galloped back to the city.

Three of the bearers returned, unthinkingly, to their work at Nôtre Dame, wondering what ailed the man they had carried to the Abbey, but the dark-skinned sculptor was not popular among his fellow-craftsmen, and they soon dismissed the matter from their minds.

Eric followed them for a few yards, then lagged behind, and, as he saw them walk on, unmindful of his movements, he sat down behind a thick bush and waited till old Christian should have made his way out of the city, as arranged between them.

Long and earnestly did the two men talk and consider how to avert this terrible fate from the fair Ingeburge, who was now under the same roof as the man who had sworn to take her life, while her two faithful friends were almost within sound of her voice, yet powerless to save her.

The afternoon wore on, and as the last rays of the setting sun were glancing across the road, they were also struggling to penetrate the narrow cell where Mahmoud-el-Reis lay in his death-like stupor. The white-washed walls were bare, save for a crucifix that hung over the small *prie dieu* at the foot of the pallet-bed, which, with a low, wooden stool, completed the furniture of the tiny room.

His face was a shade paler than usual, and had a deathly hue, in spite of the bronze tone of the skin; his eyes were closed, his sinewy, supple limbs were rigid and motionless.

By his side sat an old monk, with a good-natured, expressionless face, who held in his limp, nerveless hands a rosary, over which he mechanically mumbled the Office, taking no notice of the sick man in his charge. To the good brother's eyes the Syrian was as good as dead, so, as he could do nothing to help the body, he was doing his best, in his own lazy way, to pave an entrance into the future state for the soul that must soon leave its earthly tenement.

The patient had not moved or given the least sign of life since he had been carried in that morning; and the old monk's rosary was a long one, so every now and then he dozed over his prayers in that silent cell, and woke up again refreshed, to find all as it had been an hour ago. If anyone could have gone in, unperceived, during one of these little naps, he would have been forcibly struck by the contrast between the two faces in repose before him.

The good monk was plump and ruddy, with shaven tonsure and three well-developed chins. His face spoke of an amiable character weakened by habitual indolence, and, even if one could swear that he had never done much good in the world, it was equally certain he had never, consciously, done any harm.

The face on the pillow, with its sharply-defined features, its energy, its pride and its passion, was that of a man whose very life was action, and whose force was wielded for good or ill with irresistible intensity.

The life of the monk had been as a dreamless sleep, untroubled by remorse, ungilded by love, unmoved by aspiration.

That of the Moslem had been as a whirlwind, a tempest, in which every passion had played its part, and the dusky pallor of his cheek seemed a mystic revelation of the volcano that slumbered in his heart.

A ray of sunlight fell upon the two faces, and with its warmth there appeared a healthier glow on the Syrian's forehead—signs of returning consciousness gradually developed, and a faint smile played for a second on the discoloured lips.

The monk's rubicund face became yet more rosy in the light, and he slept on peacefully, like a child, with his white, flaccid hands folded over the long rosary, and his round head cushioned on the three chins.

At last there was a slight quiver in the Syrian's eyelids, and they were slowly raised till the eyes were half-open; but the glance that came from beneath them was weak and weary, not to be recognised as the bright, flashing eagle-eyes of Mahmoud-el-Reis. This man never did anything by halves, and the potion he had swallowed had not only given him the appearance of illness, but had produced symptoms of the gravest character.

The cleverest physician that even modern medical science could produce would have unhesitatingly declared Mahmoud's life to be in the greatest danger.

His swoon had lasted many hours, and now that he was regaining his faculties his physical exhaustion was such as to prevent him from using them. For the flame of life was flickering very low in the breast of Mahmoud-el-Reis at this moment.

Some minutes elapsed before the half-open eyes could distinguish any object in his strange surroundings, and a terrible fear seized him.

"Am I blind?" he thought, "or is it the dead of night that makes all look so black?"

He tried to raise his hand to sweep away, if might be, the mist which obscured his eyes; but the arm refused to obey the brain—it lay beside him as a useless thing over which he had no control.

The tired eye-lids drooped again, and he thought, almost with indifference, so great was his weakness:

"The dose was strong. Allah grant that it may not have been too strong!"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Assassin's Nurse.

Ten minutes or more elapsed before Mahmoud-el-Reis opened his eyes again. It never occurred to him to ask for help; the man was self-reliant even in his weakness; moreover, he felt that the deadly effects of the drug were passing off, and his superb constitution was asserting itself in his favour. He gradually became able to distinguish the form of the sleeping monk sitting facing him at his bedside, and with the return of power came also the memory of his mission. He half raised himself on his elbow, and so brought his eyes upon a level with the face of his unconscious companion. After a close scrutiny of the good man's features, the Syrian shook his head, sank back exhausted on the pillow, and thought within himself:

"I shall get nothing out of that man! He has no passions to appeal to!"

The slight exertion caused a return of faintness, all became dark again before his eyes, and he lapsed into a heavy, dreamless sleep. Brother Martin woke with a start and sprang to his feet as quickly as his weight and years would allow of. It seemed to him that he had heard a sound like the creaking of a bedstead in his dreams, and, as he crossed himself piously, he looked towards the silent figure and recognised that the posture had been changed.

"Holy Saints protect us! The dead man has moved!"

His trembling fingers sought in vain for the rosary which had fallen to the ground; his teeth chattered, his blood ran cold, and to his terrified mind the cell seemed peopled with ghostly visitants. He dare not leave his post; he was too paralysed to call for help, too bewildered even to pray. To his infinite relief, however, steps and voices were heard in the corridor, and in another moment the door opened to admit the Prior, followed by a closely-veiled woman.

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"You have done enough for to-day, Brother Martin," said Anselm kindly. "Go and take your well-earned rest."

Instead of obeying the old monk stood, as if dazed, fumbling for his rosary.

"Go in peace, my brother!" repeated the Prior.

"My father," stammered Martin, "I have committed the deadly sin of sloth, I fell asleep over my Office, I neglected my charge, and when I woke I thought the dead had moved!"

"The dead?" exclaimed the Prior and his companion in one breath, and the former bent down to feel if the Syrian's pulse still beat.

"Go, my brother, and sin no more, God will pardon thine offence, for thou art old and weak."

Brother Martin found his rosary at last, and resumed his mumbled prayers as he slowly made his way out of the cell. When the last sound of his heavy footsteps had died away the Prior led the veiled figure to the low stool whereon the monk had slumbered and prayed, and, in a low tone, resumed an evidently interrupted narrative.

"Yes, my dear daughter, the King has obeyed the command of Holy Church and appeared this morning before the Council appointed by His Holiness to enquire into this matter of his marriage. One who was there told me that his Majesty comported himself as became a Christian monarch."

"May God be with him and guide him now and ever;" prayed the veiled figure in a voice of emotion.

"The Council has not arrived at a decision, but it is easy to foretell that it will be in your favour. Justice will at last be done to you, my dear daughter. You, and you alone, will be Queen of France!"

The old monk stood, as if dazed, fumbling for his rosary.

Ingeburge raised her veil, and the tears gathered in her eyes as she murmured:

"Queen of France! Say rather, the wife of Philip Augustus! The throne has no charms for me save when shared with my lord and King."

Prior Anselm smiled wonderingly. He could not fathom the love of this gentle heart, which no cruelty or neglect had been able to crush.

"You remember, my daughter, that you asked permission to help in nursing our poor sick folk, and for a whole week I have hesitated to fulfil my promise to you, but, when this man was brought here by the King's command——"

"By the King's command?" interrupted Ingeburge.

"I said to myself," quietly pursued the Prior, "that he should be the first patient to be tended by the Queen. God be with you, my daughter!" and after a few whispered injunctions Anselm quitted the cell.

The sun set, the after-glow faded, and evening deepened into night. The narrow cell was in darkness, save for a pale ray of moonlight which cast a shadowy haze over the figure of the sick man, who still slept on while the white-robed Queen knelt beneath the Crucifix.

At last there came a sigh out of the ghostly silence, and before Ingeburge could rise from her knees, a faint voice cried:

"Am I alone?"

Mahmoud-el-Reis thought he was dreaming, when, instead of the monotonous drone of the old monk, he heard the sweetest tones that had fallen on his ear for many a long day, answer gently:

"No, my brother, you are not alone. There is one here who watches over you and prays for you."

The words seemed to give fresh life to his weak spirit, and he thought: "If I were a thousand leagues from here, in the scented forests where the rose trees hang their flower-laden branches over the ancient bed of a mountain torrent, I should say: 'I have heard the voice of Dilah, my beloved!'"

His long sleep had strengthened and refreshed him, so that he could now raise himself in bed with comparative ease. His eyes sought eagerly to pierce the darkness and look upon the owner of this sweet voice.

"Where are you?" he asked.

There was no answer, but he heard the friction of flint and steel and saw one or two sparks emitted. Then came silence and darkness again. She was evidently a novice and unskilled in such matters.

"Give it to me," he said. "My chest burns like fire and my throat is parched. I could bear it better if I might see the light."

What he really wanted was to see the face of the woman who had spoken so gently to him. He was not a man to waste time, and he said to Montruel that morning: "If there are only men about the Queen it may take me a day, but if there is one woman, I can do it in an hour."

He held out his hand, and heard a light step cross the cell, then felt the contact of cool, soft fingers with his own fevered ones, which tried to press the little hand in his, but it escaped him and he only held the flint and steel.

In a few seconds the lamp which hung above the bed was lighted, and the Syrian saw the slight, youthful form of a woman dressed in white, whose features were concealed by a long gauze veil.

Ingeburge watched with deep interest the awakening faculties of this strange man who had laid so long in his deathlike sleep. His dark, piercing eyes had regained much

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of their wonted brilliancy, and were fixed upon her with an intensity which both fascinated and repelled her. She felt a strange power in this man, who was so different from any she had ever seen before, even while his bodily weakness appealed to her womanly sympathy. Mindful of her self-chosen task, she poured the contents of a small phial into a cup which stood beside his pillow and handed it to him.

He pushed it away with a gesture of repugnance, saying:

"Water! give me a draught of cold, pure water!"

"But this is a healthful remedy," she protested gently.

Mahmoud was still looking at her with his glittering eyes, now brightened by returning fever and excitement, and his voice sounded low and strange as he asked:

"How long have Christian maidens hidden their faces like the slaves of the East?"

"Drink this cooling draught, my brother," was the only

She shrank from the Syrian.

response; but the voice sounded as if the speaker was smiling.

He refused the drug, however, and would drink only cool water. As he handed her back the cup all signs of remaining weakness vanished as if by a miracle.

"Thank you, maiden," he said, in a voice so deep and melodious that it was to Ingeburge as if someone else must have entered the cell. She started, and took the empty cup he was holding out to her. He then turned so that the light did not fall upon his own features, and prepared for conquest.

"Maiden," he began gently, "you are kind and helpful, and the Almighty ever rewards mercy and virtue. The sacred poets say that the Prophet gave the rich dates of Aroen to Sidda, the wife of Moses, in return for a cup of water. I am Jean Cador, the carver of images, to whom princes speak with deference. The chief of your priests in Paris will pay me for my statue with its weight in gold. I am willing to share that gold with you, maiden. What think you?"

Ingeburge made him no answer, not because she was offended at his offer, but because she was trying to remember when and where she had heard the name of Jean Cador. It seemed familiar, and after a time it dawned upon her that Eve had mentioned it in her long story of men and things, but no clear idea was connected with it in the Queen's mind.

"Do you not care to be rich, maiden?" persisted the Syrian, turning his head so as to try and see her face in the light of the lamp.

She was still very young, and had her share of that curiosity with which her sex is accredited, so, as this adventure appeared interesting, she determined to lead the stranger on to say more.

"Oh, yes, my brother. I should like to be rich, of course!"

Mahmoud-el-Reis began to think that an hour would be too long to win this woman, and he continued eloquently:

"Riches, riches are like the costly varnish that a cunning painter puts upon his work to bring out the depth and wealth of his colouring—riches can procure that which can enhance even beauty itself!"

"With riches, my brother, one can comfort many sorrows and heal many wounds," said Ingeburge gently.

The Moslem stopped, and for a moment he hesitated before spreading anew the net he had prepared to catch this young girl. A feeling of respect for her simple kindliness, for her purity, her innocence, chained his tongue for a while, but he might not go back, so he changed his tactics; for human nature can be led astray by the hope of doing good as well as by the grosser forms of evil.

"And there is so much suffering in the world," he resumed; "so many who languish in want and misery in this great city of Paris! Thank God, my gifts would not be wasted on selfish pleasures! Instead of decking your brow with costly jewels you would adorn your soul with deeds of mercy."

Ingeburge was still abstracted, struggling to remember what Eve had told her about this Jean Cador, for he seemed to have a kindly heart, though he spoke like one who was in ignorance of Christian faith and practice.

"Did you think, my brother, that you would find women in this holy retreat who were addicted to the vanities of this world?"

Mahmoud felt he was losing time, so he drew from his vest a richly-embroidered silk purse full of gold, and held it out to her, quite expecting to see some sign of a desire to possess the handsome gift, in spite of her pious words. She was too absorbed in her own tormenting thoughts to take much notice of it, and, cynic as he was, he attributed her indifference to dissimulation. Changing his tone, he said:

"I have heard that the King's first wife is confined in this Abbey; is it so, maiden?"

"Yes, they have told you truly," replied Ingeburge with now fully awakened interest.

"Do you happen to know anything of her?"

"Oh, yes, I know her."

"And perhaps you love her?"

"Yes, I—love—her," was the uncertain answer, for it had just flashed across Ingeburge's mind that the name of Jean Cador was coupled with another of fearful significance.

She shrank from the Syrian, as if the purse he still held out to her had been a poisoned dagger, and with faltering voice and strained eyes she cried:

"You have another name?"

"Yes, I have," was the calm reply.

Ingeburge's knees gave way beneath her, and a deadly fear seized her heart.

"God in Heaven! if this is my last hour, have pity on Thy child, and pardon my sinful soul!"

She believed that Jean Cador was the same as Mahmoud-el-Reis, who had come to Paris to kill the Queen, and this mixture of truth and error had brought yet another thought, which pierced her heart with unspeakable anguish—he had been sent by the King.

(To be continued.)

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THE TOY DOG.

THERE is nothing so pathetic as a little stuffed canton flannel dog, standing on a mantel where it was put by a little hand now quiet in the grave. The wee toddler is dead and gone, but still the little toy dog keeps watch day by day for the coming of its baby master. It seems to gaze out of its shoe-button eyes with a longing for its little playmate, and the heart-sick parents gently dust the treasured toy and sigh for the bright-eyed lad who will no more try to pat the sawdust stuffing out of the home-made pup with a tin horn. But if the baby boy continues to eat three meals a day as usual, the little toy dog is not such a pathetic animal.

My boy shows no signs of quick consumption, appendicitis, or even colic. I don't believe he would die by special request. He seems destined to live to be as great and good as his father one of these days.

When my wife constructed the canton flannel dog, we viewed it with unalloyed satisfaction. It was a bright-red dog of a hitherto unknown breed. It was plumper in the legs than any dog I had ever seen. In fact, it seemed to have started with the idea of being a particularly robust elephant, then humped itself into a camel, and ended by donning a snout like a hog.

When we gave it to our boy on Christmas morning with the somewhat untruthful assertion that it had been left by Santa Claus, it required a great deal of persuasion to make the boy believe it was a dog. He had come to know a dog by name when he saw one, and he was sceptical. I cannot blame him. Even to this day I wonder at the boundless faith he evinced when he at last accepted his mother's assertion that it was "a nice 'ittle doggie." If she had told him it was a nice 'ittle hippopotamus, or a nice 'ittle Agathaumas sphenocerus, reconstructed from remains found in the cretaceous deposits, his faith would have been less remarkable.

As it was, he folded the thing to his youthful bosom, and repeated the statement that it was a "nice 'ittle doggie." It was his first lie.

Then he played with it. With a glad cry he threw it on to the piano, and knocked a costly vase I had given my wife into ten thousand pieces. For a moment he mourned for the dog, and then he began eating sections of vase under the impressions that they were French confections. It took the combined efforts of my wife and two doctors to extract the sections of vase from our boy's throat. Then we gave him a picture book, and put the dog safely away on the mantelpiece.

Shortly after we heard the eight day clock fall to the floor with a crash. Also fell: two Dresden china shepherds, a glass jar containing chrysanthemums, a bronze Mercury, and several pieces of bric-a-brac that were broken into such small fragments that they were beyond identification. But our boy had the red dog, and he was happy.

"Me dot nice 'ittle doggie," he remarked calmly.

After that we removed everything breakable, and let our boy and the dog do their worst. Their worst was two panes of glass.

That evening when the boy was tucked in his little bed I calculated the damage he and his pet were responsible for, and I was ready to write something pathetic about canton flannel dogs. But I did not. Instead, I read a few chapters in a book my wife had given me. Then we were ready for bed.

I took the water jug, and started up stairs followed by my wife bearing the lamp. It was a big lamp, and she needed both hands to carry it. When I reached the step next the last my foot alighted squarely on something soft and rolly. It was the red dog. First I said something, and then I did a back somersault with great rapidity and considerable abandonment. On my way down I met my wife coming up. She seemed to change her mind suddenly, and decided to go down with me. It was very kind and thoughtful of her, but I really did not appreciate the kindness of her act when she carelessly hit me on the head with the lamp. Afterwards she claimed that it was I who hit her on the head with the water jug. It is still an unsettled question.

When we reached the bottom she was sitting on my head with the lamp jammed into my neck, down which the oil was running in a warm stream.

We were both badly damaged, but when we recovered sufficient sense to see clearly, we beheld the red dog smiling down upon us from the step next to the top.

Without a word I crawled up the stairs, and grasping that unearthly canine by the head I ripped it open from stem to stern with my knife, while his sawdust filler trickled out upon the stair.

The dog had an existence of one day, and he doesn't stand on the mantel. He is a dead dog, and before I let my boy have another such dangerous beast I would rather present him with a full-blooded bull dog, for that style of dog can at least be chained to the leg of the piano. Don't talk to me about little toy dogs and pathos. If you must read tales of stuffed pups and departed kids, please wait until the scent of embrocation disappears from the atmosphere of our humble home.

E. S.

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Stories of the Stock Exchange.

3 The Great Conspiracy

Unearthed and Re-Edited by Robert Machray.

There was sore discontent in the City. Something like settled gloom rested upon the great majority of the brokers, jobbers, and other operators on 'Change.

And yet there was no specially bad news. There was no rumour current at the moment of any tremendous defeat at the hands of Napoleon, although there were tales of dark doings in Spain. But it was undoubtedly the case that there was something ominous, something threatening, something even deadly in the air of the Stock Exchange.

There was nothing on the surface, however, that seemed to account for it. As a matter of fact, a great transaction had just been completed with extraordinary success. The Government had come into the market by means of its accredited agents, and had borrowed a large sum with as much ease as one man might have in borrowing half-a-crown from another. In former years, and these not so long ago, the raising of a loan, even with the nation as security, would have been a matter for long and protracted negotiation.

Indeed, there were men who had made it their chief business to raise difficulties, real or imaginary, in the way of the Government on such occasions. In other words, they would have endeavoured to have made the nation pay as high a price as possible for the money it borrowed. The result of these tactics was that there were plenty of splendid pickings for all and sundry on the Stock Exchange.

Here was a change indeed. For, with the exception of two or three people, no one had benefited by the Government loan which had been placed on the market. True, the Treasury had obtained the supplies it required both cheaply and quickly, and the country, as a whole, was so much the better for it.

What had that to do with the thing, asked the disgusted brokers. What were the Government or the country, forsooth, but pieces—big pieces, of course, but still pieces—on the board of the great game played week in, week out, of speculation? And if this were so, why should not everybody have a hand in it? Why should it be reserved for a select few?

So the situation was summed up by Mr. Joel Rosenthal, as he sat in a room in the "City of London Tavern." He was the centre of a little group of men, upon whose faces were looks of determination, of bitter resentment, and even of fierceness. They were brokers, jobbers, dealers, intermediaries of one sort or another between those who bought and those who sold on the Stock Exchange.

It was after business hours, and on the table in front of them stood glasses of punch, which, however, appeared to have been touched but little, so earnest and absorbing had been their conversation. Now, as that May day of 1810 drew to its close, and the candles were lit by the attentive Perkins, who had so long been head-waiter at the well-known inn, they drew their seats more closely together, and their talk proceeded in somewhat stealthy whisperings.

"It's a shame, an infernal shame! that's what it is," said one.

"'Tis more than a shame," said Rosenthal. "'Tis taking the bread out of all our mouths, and putting it into the mouth of a single man. If it continues we shall not be able to live. There will be nothing

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left for us to do. There must be a change, and that speedily, or we shall all starve."

"Aye, but what is to be done?" asked a third. "He has grown so great, he has waxed so fat, he has become so monstrous rich, that he carries everything before him."

"He must be put an end to somehow," said Rosenthal.

Here one of the party looked at the last speaker somewhat strangely across the table.

"Yet everybody knows that you, yourself, are related to him. Will he do nothing for you?" he asked.

these Goldsmids came over from Holland to London some forty years ago. He was not exactly a rich man when he began business, but he was of that nature to which money-making is an instinct. He was of the sort who grow rich where most others would have remained poor. To him were born sons and daughters—the sons inherited his ability in finance. His daughters married diamond merchants, but the sons—this one amongst them, inherited something more than their father's skill in business, something more than the money which he left them."

Rosenthal stopped—impressively, as one about to make a startling statement. Those who listened to

The situation was summed up by Mr. Joel Rosenthal, as he sat in a room in the "City of London Tavern."

"No, confound him," said Rosenthal. "I hate him with all my heart, and I, for one, would be prepared to do anything almost to bring him to ruin."

"But how? It will be no slight affair, no ordinary combination that will bring *that* about."

"I think it can be done. His firm has no friends left on the Stock Exchange. He has purchased his success at everybody's expense. Just let the opportunity be given, and you shall see how his enemies will rejoice. Nay, I will tell you more than this."

He paused for a moment. Then, his gaze having swept slowly and almost solemnly round the table, he told them one of the strangest stories ever listened to by mortal ears.

"You all know, or have heard, that the father of

him wondered what could be coming. To them it seemed as if there was well-nigh nothing left for the Goldsmids to be possessed of, either by inheritance or by any other way.

"They inherited—a *curse*." Rosenthal's voice, sibilant, menacing, had a curious thrill in it.

The men whom he addressed were hard, unsentimental, incredulous.

"A curse!" said one, with a laugh. "A curse! his is the talk of children. Do you mean to say, Joel Rosenthal, that you believe in such stuff as that? A curse! Drivel!" and again he laughed harshly.

"I say 'tis no childish nonsense this. Do we not all know that there are things," replied Rosenthal, "that——. But listen first to my story. None of

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you perhaps knew Israel, the Wizard. *Wizard*—that's the nearest I can come to it in your tongue. In Hebrew we called him Baal Shem—a sooth-sayer, diviner, seer—a man who could foretell what was in the future."

Rosenthal's manner was that of one so convinced of the truth of what he was speaking about that the others forgot their unbelief for the moment, and were all attention.

"Israel was the greatest friend that Aaron Goldsmid had. They were the closest intimates. A great part of Aaron's success was no doubt due to the advice given him by the Baal Shem. But Israel had no spells which would prevent his own death, and in course of time he died. While he lay upon his death-bed he confided to Goldsmid a sealed package.

"He gave Aaron a message at the same time, even as he drew his last breath. It was to the effect that so long as that mysterious package was in the possession of the Goldsmid family they would have such prosperity as was beyond all dreams of avarice. 'A time will come,' said the dying man, 'when the package must be opened, wait for it. You will know the season by'—then the death rattle took him, choked him, and silenced him for ever."

"He gave Aaron a message at the same time, even as he drew his last breath."

There was another pause.

"What has all this to do with us? How can it help us to come by our rights, for such they are, and to overthrow this leviathan who swallows up everything?" asked one man, less moved than the others.

"I have not yet finished my story," said Rosenthal. "Aaron Goldsmid knew that the dying lips of the seer could not utter a falsehood, but the message he had left was incomplete. When was the time to arrive at which the package was to be opened? He had been told to wait for it, but till when? That weighed upon his mind so much that he became restless and troubled. Perhaps you will say that it was merely superstition, but he believed in what the wizard had said.

"Aaron Goldsmid died suddenly—that everybody knows. But it is not so generally known what was the manner of his death. It is known, however, in his own family, and by those who are connected with it. As time passed on, the mystery of the sealed package so worked upon him that he felt compelled at last to open it. Wrapping after wrapping was removed, until at length he came upon a single sheet of parchment, upon which were written in the sacred, almost forgotten characters of the oldest form of our language, that in which the law was given, a prophecy of what was to be.

"He who first broke these seals, graven with the device stamped on them by the ring of the Baal Shem, was to bring about his own fate by his very act. A mortal sickness was to seize upon him. How, why, I cannot tell. But Aaron Goldsmid died that day."

"A strange tale, sure enough," said he who had spoken before. "But of what use to us?"

"A true story; I know it is true," said another, a Jew like Rosenthal.

"Nor was that all," said Rosenthal. "Here I speak, however, of what I do not know for certain, but of what I have heard half-hinted with bated breath amongst ourselves. It is that the prophecy went on to say that the children of Aaron Goldsmid were to be cut off suddenly and unexpectedly when at the very height of their prosperity. Kings were to be their guests, and their state was to be that of princes. Yet in the midst of this golden time of theirs they were to wither away and perish.

"Now, what has already happened? Did not one son die mysteriously—cut off in the midst of his wealth and power? 'Twas said to be the gout, but 'twas by violence, though that is not the report.

"Abraham Goldsmid cannot forget what was said by the Baal Shem. What is written is written—there is no saying that is truer than that. Rich and powerful as he is, he carries about with him that canker at his heart. For years he has had everything his own way. There has been no check to the flow of his prosperity. But if there should be a change—don't you see—the mere recollection of that fatal prophecy will paralyse

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his nerves and palsy his brains. Then he does not forget how his brother perished."

When he had ceased speaking he looked carefully into each face to see what the effect of his words had been. One of them asked: "Is it true?"

"It is true—I know," again said the Jew who had given a similar testimony already.

"Yes, it is true; every word of it!" said Rosenthal. "You all know me, and the sort of man I am in business. I am no weakling to place belief in old wives' fables. But this is true.

"Let us look at the position of affairs," went on Rosenthal. "Is there a single member of the Stock Exchange who will not gladly help him on to his downfall? Let but the tide go against him ever so little, and there is not a mouth in the City that will not find breath enough to try to strand and wreck him upon the shore."

"But how to bring about that change?" asked one.

"I was going to add," continued Rosenthal, "it needs not so much as you might suppose, for that ever-present fear of his will prove his worst foe."

Then Rosenthal, who had evidently given the subject much consideration, outlined a scheme, bold and yet cunning, for the downfall of the House of Goldsmid.

It was discussed and adopted, each man pledging himself to work with a single eye to its success, and to endeavour by every possible means to get the co-operation of others. Thereupon they separated in a determined and hopeful mood.

During the time that this conversation had been going on, the old head-waiter, good Tom Perkins, had several times entered the room to see if further refreshments were required. Being by nature a bit of a gossip, like most waiters, and more privileged than most, he had managed to hear snatches of their talk. Being also a man much learned in human nature—as indeed is the case with those of his calling—he guessed not only from what he had heard, but also from what he saw, that there was mischief afoot.

As a general thing, Perkins would have said that it was no affair of his. "Gen'l'm'n in the City would be up to their tricks; 'twas their way," he had often told himself, for he knew very well that tricks, as he called them, were part of the game. But the name of Goldsmid, however, had reached his ears; that name made all the difference. He could never hear it uttered without having a certain moistness about his eyes.

And the way of it was this:

One day the world, so far as Perkins was concerned, had, to all intents and purposes, come to an end. He owed a debt he could not pay—'twas not much, being only a matter of £50 or so, but it was just as far beyond his means as if the sum involved had spelt millions. As he had been shining up the silver in the dining-room of the tavern, he had felt the bailiff's hand upon his shoulder.

He could not have felt worse if it had been the hand of death. He was arrested. What was to become of his wife and their five children! Prevailing upon the officer to let him wait at table during the mid-day meal, he fulfilled his duties with so melancholy an air that it attracted the attention of Abraham Goldsmid, who inquired what the matter was.

Goldsmid was a kindly soul, and Perkins, who waited on him daily, was a favourite of his. Bursting into tears, Perkins told him how he was placed.

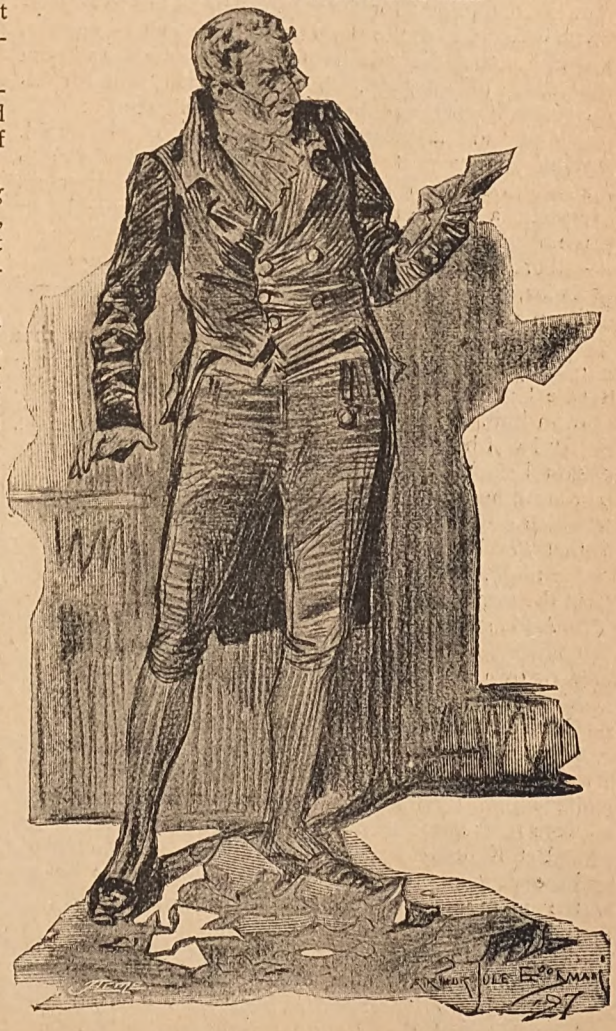
"'Tain't for myself," said Tom, "but for my wife and the poor children at home. I don't know what on earth will become of them."

"How much is it, Tom?" asked Goldsmid.

"Fifty-five pounds," he replied.

"Tuts, tuts, man. I'll put that right for you."

And then the great banker had instantly drawn forth his cheque-book, and filled up an order for a hundred pounds, which he handed to Tom. No, Tom was never likely to forget that. Henceforth, the name of Goldsmid was sacred to him.



At length he came upon a single sheet of parchment.

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What was he to do? At least he might give a warning, the warning which would forearm. And the sooner the better—that was plain enough. So that evening Perkins went to the banker's house, but found he had gone to his country mansion at Roehampton, where a great banquet was being given. Urged by his spirit of gratitude, Tom procured a horse, which he mounted with fear and trembling, as he was no horseman, and set out along the Richmond Road. It was not, however, until far in the night that he was able to get speech with Goldsmid, and to tell him of what he more than suspected.

It had been a magnificent entertainment, graced by the presence of Royalty itself, and in every way worthy of the wealth and taste of a king of finance. Goldsmid was in high spirits, both on account of the success of his dinner-party and also because the King that very day had graciously given him a pardon for a Jew, a poor member of the synagogue, who had been condemned for forgery. He was in too benevolent a mood at the moment to think evil of anyone.

He listened good-humouredly enough as Tom unfolded his tale, and, while he thanked him for his thoughtfulness, was inclined to make light of it.

"You are a grateful fellow, Perkins," he said. "But your regard for me, I think, has led you to attach too much importance to what was after all perhaps a chance meeting. Whoever they were, I fear them not. As for plots and tricks and stratagems—there are always plenty of them on the Stock Exchange. And threatened men live long——." Then a sort of shadow passed over his face.

What was Goldsmid thinking of? Was it of that ghostly bequest of destiny, of which he was now the sole legatee? If so, he immediately shook the idea from him.

"I will bear in mind what you have done, Perkins," said he. "Nay, stop a minute." And, generous to a fault, he presented to the man a handful of guineas which he took from his pocket. Then he gave orders that Perkins should be given food and a place for the night, and so dismissed the man and the matter at the same instant.

And small wonder. For years past, the great financial firm of the Goldsmids had more than held their own in their rivalry for the Government loans with such people as the Couttses, the Grotes, the Curtises, and others of the principal magnates of the City. The chief cashier of the Bank of England was practically their partner. The Barings, then becoming pillars of a world-wide financial power, were their associates.

Yet if he had reflected a little longer, he might have remembered that they had few friends among the members of the Stock Exchange; how very few these friends were in number had as yet not been disclosed to him. In fact, his great prosperity had lulled him into a feeling of false security.

Now, in no department of affairs, can it be too much kept in mind that "eternal vigilance is the price of safety." This is especially true of the Stock Exchange. It was not many days before he found out that his vigilance had slept, and so experienced how precarious are the foundations of even a vast fortune when beat upon by the storms and tempests of Capel-court.

All through the summer of that year the storm had been gathering. It was now about to break. Rosenthal was the prime mover, and in him it possessed a spirit at once bold and resolute, cold as the grave and as pitiless. The unerring judgment of the man was shown by his selecting for the field of battle, as it were, the greatest single Government loan which had ever been placed upon the market at one time.

In May of that year, Mr. Perceval, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had announced in his Budget speech to the House of Commons that a loan nominally of the amount of twelve millions sterling, but which with the premium came to fourteen millions sterling—the three per cents. in those days ranged between sixty and seventy—had been taken up by the firms of Goldsmid and Co. and Baring and Co.

In other words, Abraham Goldsmid, for he was the real principal, had contracted for the whole loan.

It was not, however, until far in the night that he was able to get speech with Goldsmid.

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Of course, it was his purpose to sell the Funds represented by this loan to the public through the Stock Exchange in the usual way at a considerable premium. If the operation were successful he would realise an immense profit. On former occasions in regard to other loans he had met with no difficulty in following a similar course, nor did he anticipate any other sequel now.

At the beginning certainly everything looked favourable enough.

The "Omnium"* towards the end of June, was quoted at a premium of one and one quarter per cent. In July, however, there was a sudden change.

In one of the purlieus of Fleet Street there had been written and printed a pamphlet which appeared to prove conclusively that the French, with that everlasting bogey of a Bonaparte at their head, were quietly and secretly taking all the gold out of the country. Few people would suspect, said the writer, that many a herring-boat was dispatched from the English coast with a cargo not of fish but of guineas.

This precious pamphlet was the first act of Rosenthal, and it was strangely and unexpectedly productive of results. The words of the pamphlet echoed throughout the country, and induced many of the real money holders to sell the Funds out of sheer fright that Britain might become bankrupt.

Taking immediate advantage of this opening, and with a view to increase its effects, he caused some of his associates to offer stock at 20 per cent. under the market-price if payment were made for it in gold.

Simultaneously with these proceedings, Rosenthal and his friends managed to procure from the collectors and receivers of the National revenue so large an amount of floating securities, such as Exchequer bills and India bonds, that Goldsmid, in spite of all his money, found it impossible to keep the price of the "omnium" up, and by the end of August it was at a discount of two per cent.

Goldsmid struggled desperately against these serried ranks of sellers—selling, selling, selling, ever selling the Funds. They hung about his agents; they hustled them on 'Change, they hooted at and guyed them. If his brokers opened their mouths to ask a price, that very moment there seemed to be a signal given, and the quotation appeared to be here a sixteenth, there an eighth, there a quarter, here a full half, below the last—always a little lower.

The struggle began to tell upon him. He became fitful, morose, depressed. The tell-tale lines of the face deepened. The eyes grew weary. Strange bursts of temper shook the man. Nor was it singular, when it was known that he was now losing money to the tune of something like £100,000 a day.

The whisper went round that the House of Goldsmid

The well-known figure of the banker was seen, one day, passing along Lombard Street.

was going, and the conspirators lost no opportunity of painting the situation as even blacker than it really was. In every way within their power they laboured to destroy the credit of his firm, and credit is one of those delicate things which will not stand much of this kind of business. But as yet Goldsmid held his head proudly enough, and honoured every demand upon him.

The first fortnight of that September, however, showed that the struggle was only beginning, and that the worst had yet to come. Delighted with their success, the band of plotters were incessant in their activity, and when they had brought the "omnium" down to a discount of four per cent. by the fourteenth of the month, Goldsmid for the first time realised that the fight was one to the death.

His losses now amounted, it was said quite openly—and the openness with which it was said was in itself the worst of all signs—to between one and two millions sterling.

It was at this very time that there occurred an incident which was trifling in its character, but which had the most marked effect upon Goldsmid himself and upon the whole Stock Exchange.

The well-known figure of the banker was seen, one

*"Omnium" meant the various kinds of stock covering the National debt in which a loan was eventually absorbed, or, to make the matter more easily understood, a person purchasing a certain quantity of "omnium," purchased given proportions of the various descriptions of Government securities. In those days there were the three, four, five per cents., the Navy five's, India bonds, besides consols, &c.

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day, passing along Lombard Street. It was noticed that his body was bent as if with fatigue, and that his whole appearance showed symptoms of cruel strain. His eyes were fixed, as if upon some object which he saw in front of him, and he turned neither to the right nor to the left in his steps. He seemed utterly absorbed.

Suddenly a bull, which had escaped from the hands of a butcher, rushed down the street, and before the banker could move out of its way it had knocked him down and trodden upon him. There were many who said that it was an evil omen. Amongst those who went to Goldsmid's assistance was Tom Perkins, the head-waiter of the "City of London Tavern." Tom had no idea that it was an omen, good or bad, but he saw the accident which had befallen his benefactor, and with the help of two others made haste to carry him into the inn, where, presently, Goldsmid revived.

When he came to himself, having been made somewhat dazed by what had happened, he kept murmuring to himself in a childish fashion, and Tom at first could make no sense out of his babblings. But after a while Goldsmid fully recovered, and demanded that he should be left alone. As Tom remained after the others, anxiously inquiring if there was anything he could do for him, Goldsmid said—

"Ah, my man, if I only could have seen how much there was behind what you told me a few weeks ago, how very different would be my case. But how could I tell? You may still, however, do me a great service. You told me that you overheard some men devising a plot against me. You never told me their names. Tell me now. Who was their leader?"

In the course of his daily avocations at the tavern, which was frequented by so many members of the Stock Exchange, Perkins had heard several rumours of how Goldsmid was being "hurt" in trying to dispose of the loan for which he had contracted with the Government. His sympathies were, of course, with Goldsmid.

"I am under the deepest obligation, sir, to you," said honest Tom, "and you have a right to ask me to do almost anything in return. It was Mr. Rosenthal, a relative of your own, if I mistake not, who appeared to be the chief speaker at the meeting of which I told you."

"Rosenthal! Joel!" exclaimed Goldsmid. "Ah, he is implacable. He has neither forgiven nor forgotten how I refused him the hand of my brother's daughter." And, muttering to himself, "Bad, bad, bad," insisted upon leaving the tavern at once.

But Rosenthal had yet one more card to play, one more deadly stroke to deliver, and that by far the most fatal of all.

On the Monday following the accident the market was in a state of semi-panic. Several failures of merchants of fairly high standing were announced. The "Bears" were bolder than ever, and the discount on "omnium" went down to seven per cent. Amongst those who were watching what was going on was a director of the East India Company. Rosenthal addressed him, as he knew him well.

"A word with you in private, if you please."

They moved aside into a quiet part of the street.

"I may be mistaken, sir," said Rosenthal, "but your Company was reported to have placed bonds to a large figure in the hands of Goldsmid and Co. to dispose of. Am I right?"

"Quite right," he replied. "I can see no harm in telling you that the firm has half a million of our bonds, for which they agreed to pay us a certain sum some time ago."

"There are sinister rumours afloat. It might be a matter of wisdom to call for that money at once—to-morrow might be too late."

"I am your debtor for the hint. I shall see about the matter at once."

That very day the half million in cash was called for by the East India Company. This got to be known, and many who had deposits with the Goldsmids demanded their immediate payment.

For all the rest of that terrible week Abraham Goldsmid stood like a lion at bay, but sick at heart, and with a dreadful fear that overwhelming disaster was coming upon him. "Omnium" declined as low as eight per cent., then ten, discount.

On the day when that took place, Goldsmid made a last effort. He even went so far as to send a message to his traitorous kinsman, Rosenthal — a proceeding which was as the bitterness of death to him. Whatever it was he asked for, the only reply he received was: "Your time has come. Remember what was written."

Remember what was written! "After all," the said to himself, "no man can escape his fate." A few hours later he was dead—dead, by his own act.

It made a great sensation, for Goldsmid had done many a kindly and even noble deed. When Rosenthal heard of it he shrugged his shoulders and said: "To every dog his day."

Goldsmid's losses were Rosenthal's gains. But the time came when a fate not very different from that of the man he had plotted so successfully against was his own, and, no doubt, there were not a few who were ready enough also to say: "To every dog his day."

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The Awakening.

A MONOLOGUE.

Oh, dear! I suppose I shall have to let it go! And how carefully I have treasured it! The gold in the setting is as bright now as it was when Arthur first slipped it on my finger, and stole the kiss that I could hardly (even if he had waited to ask for it), have refused. Three years ago! What a lot has happened in those three years! Then I was just a young girl; now, I feel an old woman. I was full of illusions then—only I didn't call them illusions. I don't think I really knew then what the word meant. Now I have almost forgotten that I ever had any, it seems so long since I lost them.

But, there, what is the good of thinking. It's getting late, and Florence must be back before Jack comes home or he'll be suspicious. Here it is, Florence; be very careful.

I feel horrid at parting with it; it seems somehow like giving away a part of one's self. But, then, what else was I to do? I can't ask Jack for any more money. When I asked him to pay Violette's bill, he made quite a scene about it—said I was horribly extravagant, and things "on 'Change" had been so bad lately, and he really didn't know whether we oughtn't to move into a cheaper house. That was only a week ago, and I really wouldn't dare to show him another bill so soon, and such a big one, too.

It can't really be a bit true about "on 'Change," I believe. A year ago Jack was quite different. Really I was much more extravagant then, and he never grumbled once. Only a year makes a lot of difference in a man, doesn't it, especially if he is your husband? I really believe Jack hardly cares for me a bit now. He's always out at the club, or kept late at the office, or something—especially something, I fancy. I believe we hardly spend one evening in a week together. And to think I might have married Arthur! Oh, what a fool I've been!

How well I remember that afternoon when Arthur brought me the ring. He said the stones in it were not half so bright as my eyes. Why doesn't Jack ever talk to me like that? But, then, Jack never did have much romance in his nature, and what little he had he seems to have lost now. Arthur was always different! There was caress in his voice, and the mere touch of his hand was a declaration of love. And I might have married him!

I wonder what Arthur is doing now? I've never seen him since. Perhaps he is dead; he never was very strong—not a bit like Jack; Jack's a regular horse; nothing ever seems to make *him* ill.

If there was anything else I could have sold I would never have let Arthur's ring go. But, there, I have nothing else so valuable. I remember how he told me that there were half a dozen people after that ring, and how he had only just managed to get it by outbidding them. It was frightfully extravagant of him, but, then, he loved me—ah—how he must have loved me! Jack would never dream of buying me a ring like that, and he's a great deal better off, whatever he chooses to say now, than poor Arthur ever was.

It's lucky Jack has never seen it; he would be sure to have asked embarrassing questions about it, and I am sure I don't know what I would have said. He nearly did see it that evening, too, when he came in suddenly as I was slipping it on and off my finger and watching the diamonds glitter in the firelight. How fortunate it was that I had just got into my frock for dinner, and how I trembled when Jack insisted on pinning in the roses at my breast. I thought his clumsy fingers would be sure to tumble across its hiding-place, and, indeed, once he actually touched it, but he never guessed what it was. He wondered why it was that I rushed upstairs for my handkerchief the moment we sat down to dinner, instead of sending Florence. But the minute I had to myself in my room was quite sufficient to dive down into my dress for the ring, and lock it up in its usual place.

Ten o'clock. What a time Florence is taking. Surely the shops aren't all shut! I thought those dreadful pawnbrokers were always open. I've always heard so. I wonder what I shall get for the ring—a hundred pounds at least, though, of course it's worth a great deal more than that. I know what I'll do—I'll pay the bill; that's—let me see, seventy-five pounds and then buy myself another ring with what's left. That will be like still having Arthur's ring—in a way—and I shan't feel quite so dreadful.

Ah, there's Florence at last! What a long time you have been! *Give me the money!* Three and sixpence! *What* do you say; 3s. 6d. for a ring like that? Eh—*paste*? My—er—er—you may go, Florence. Go! Don't you hear?

Think of it! That I should have been so deceived! *Me*, it's monstrous! That little wretch of an Arthur! I don't believe he ever cared for me at all. *Paste!* and all the lies he told me about it, too! Why, it's disgraceful—scandalous! And I—loved him! No, never! And yet—no, I am sure I didn't! Horrid—er—bother this pocket—where's my handkerchief? After all, what's the good of being a woman if one can't have a good cry sometimes? What's—what's—(sinks back into a chair and sobs passionately).

Why, it's past twelve! Jack said he would be home at twelve. I mustn't let him see I have been crying. And—yes, there's a key in the door now. It is Jack! I wonder if he will come upstairs or go into the smoking-room. I know I told him never to dare to come upstairs at this time, but I didn't really mean it. Listen—yes, he is coming upstairs; the dear old fellow; Oh, I am so glad! (Runs to the door and throws herself into her husband's arms.) Come and kiss me, Jack!

Grace Mann.

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

W. G.—Of the whole length of the Suez Canal, sixty-six miles are cuttings, fourteen were made by dredging through lakes and eight required no labour.

H. asks the following question: "I see that the word 'idiot' is derived from the Greek *idiotes*, a private person. Isn't this a trifle hard on the private person?" ———How is it? The Greek word (made up from *idios*, one's own) meant a man who looked after his own affairs only, in contradistinction to the *polites* or politician. In course of time, the man who took no interest in the affairs of the city (*polis*) was looked down upon; this new signification of *idiotes* apparently became accentuated, and now our word idiot means a person incapable of attending to anything—either his own affairs or other people's.

John M.—The Magna Charta is still preserved in the British Museum. It shows traces of age, but the seal and name of King John are still legible.

Mike Colan.—Cape Colony is divided into seventy-seven districts, and its dependencies into twenty-nine. The Legislative Council consists of twenty-three members, elected for seven years; the House of Assembly has seventy-nine members, elected for five years. All members of Parliament are entitled to a guinea a day for services, with 15s. extra if resident more than fifteen miles from Cape Town.

Florian has noticed the oily or slimy feeling of seaweed, and suggests that it might be used to calm the waves in a storm.———The floating beds of seaweed observed in mid-ocean are known to reduce the height of waves, like oil thrown upon the water; but it would be too large a commission for a ship to carry a supply for that purpose. A scientist has invented a thin cotton or silken net, properly oiled, which he thinks will act in the same way, and will not take up much room.

Miner.—The name "Klondyke" means absolutely nothing. It is most probably a corruption of the Indian name for the creek made so famous by its tributaries. The Indians name a creek from some characteristic; the water is so swift in this one that, in order to set their salmon traps, they have to use a hammer to drive in the stake to which they are fixed. They call it Troan Dik (Hammer Creek) in consequence.

G. M.—Nebuchadnezzar is said to have had a library—the first on record—in which the books were bricks engraved with cuneiform characters.

V. N. is curious to know who is the biggest farmer in England. Oddly enough, his name is Farmer. He is a neighbour of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Wiltshire, and his holdings exceed 15,000 acres. He has at least one thousand cows and upwards of five thousand sheep.

Money.—No gold coinage existed in this country till the reign of Henry III.; silver and brass were the metals used prior to that. The notes used by the Bank of England cost just about one halfpenny apiece.

Lisse.—It seems strange, on first thoughts, to eat salt with oranges, but you are by no means the only person who does so. The Mexicans prefer the fruit seasoned in that way, and consider it more wholesome.

Major puts this question: "It is calculated that it requires eight times the force to move a man's body upstairs that it does to move it along on the level. It must require much less to move it downstairs. Do you know the figures?" ——— Our statistical editor is away just now, but from information received from a young man who had a similar experiment tried upon him after a brief interview with his best girl's parent, he is of opinion that the force used to move his body downstairs was twenty horse-power. He thinks, however, half that force would have been sufficient.

T. Y.—Some idea of the mixed character of the population of Austria-Hungary may be obtained from the fact that twelve languages are spoken in the army.

Valiant is anxious to possess a relic of one of our national heroes; an autograph or any similar souvenir is not good enough for him. He would like a sword. ———Such a relic fetches a high price when offered for sale, which, as you may guess, is very seldom. About four years ago the sword carried by General Wolfe at the capture of Quebec was for sale. It was in the possession of a Canadian gentleman for many years; he gave it to Major Dunn, of the 100th Regiment, a Crimean hero. Then it passed into the hands of a gentleman in the War Office, whose son put it up for sale.

W. J. T. wishes to know in which country the total population increases most rapidly; he thinks it is Germany. ———If we take the statistics for a century, we find that Russia has the most rapidly increasing population. The growth during the past century has been almost 1,000,000 annually.

Shipmate.—There are more shipwrecks in the Baltic Sea than in any other place in the world. The average is one wreck a day throughout the year.

Farmer.—Waste or desert lands are being re-claimed everywhere. In Eastern Australia, for instance, there is a region which was a sandy desert thirty years ago, but in which 100,000,000 sheep now find sustenance.

A. C. writes in this fashion: "I have heard it stated that there is gold in the bricks used in building dwelling houses. I should like to know how much, because it might pay me to pull down my old house and build a new and better one with the gold obtained from the bricks."——— You haven't a Klondyke so near home as that, A. C. The common red clay of which bricks are made contains gold in the proportion of about one shillingsworth to the ton. Estimating that there are 5,000,000 tons of brick in London houses, we see that there is £250,000 of gold stored up in the many miles of streets which go to make up the Metropolis.

Light B.—Yes, the bugle upon which was sounded the order for the charge of the Light Brigade is still in existence. The bugle, with medals and testimonials belonging to its owner, was sold quite recently by auction, the lot fetched 750 guineas.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 487. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 30TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

FANCY

often plays strange pranks with some of us. There are excellent people who fancy the earth is flat, and who decline to accept evidence to the contrary. Others fancy they can run this journal better than any able editor of ancient or modern times. Some folks fancy they are so strong they can never fall ill. Others fancy they are so ill they can never get well. The latter class is, in large part, composed of sufferers from prolonged nervous dyspepsia, with all its insidious, ever-increasing troubles. Such people are weighed down by a sense of hopelessness. They are the victims of lassitude and headache, aye, and of heartache, too, for they can enjoy little, and envy the buoyancy of their more robust fellows. In short, they endure a life of misery,

MEETING

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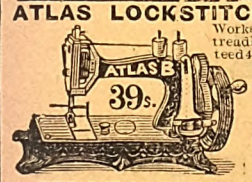

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Short Stories

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 487.] For the Week ending April 30th, 1898. [One Penny.

Love and Hypnotism.

I began my artistic career by hiring a room in an old building that had an extension at the back. At the top of the spacious extension were a number of rooms let out to young artists; the remainder of the edifice —both the front and the back buildings—was occupied by tailors and other small tradesmen, none of whom stopped very long, owing to the pranks of the knight of the brush.

Returning to my den the night following my instalment, I was swinging carelessly up the stairs, when something bright in the light of the gas jet caught my eye, and I stopped short, simply petrified with astonishment. There, curling down the banisters within six feet of my nose, was a huge serpent, its head raised, its beady little eyes glittering, and its forked tongue darting in and out of its mouth.

I think it was ten seconds before I recovered—it seemed at least ten minutes. Then I made a wild spring backwards, my hat falling into my arms as I did so. I landed somehow on my feet, and seizing my hat, a hard felt one, I flung it with all my force at the brute's head, and without waiting to see if it had taken effect, rushed howling down the passage.

Heavens! I never thought that passage was so long. I expected every minute to feel the reptile seize me. How I got down to the front door without breaking my neck I don't know, but I did, and out into the street; and, as luck would have it, right into the arms of a big Irish policeman, one of the very finest.

"An' fwat is the matter wid ye?"

"A serpent," I gasped, "loose on the stairs!"

"A sarpint, is it? Is that all?"

"Is that all! Why, man, it might have killed me!"

"Na, na! You'll get over it all right. Where do ye live?"

"Look here, policeman, no nonsense. I'm not squiffy, I'm an artist. My studio is up on the top floor of the extension, and I tell you there is a big snake—looks like a boa constrictor or a python to me—on the banisters——"

"Where's yer hat?"

"I threw it at him just as he was going to seize me."

So we went up again, the constable first, very cautiously. Arriving at the foot of the stairs we found my hat but no snake.

"Well, where is he?"

"How do I know? Do you suppose he left me his card? Of course he's sneaking round here somewhere."

Well, we hunted every nook and cranny, examined even the walls and ceilings, but all in vain. He had gone as mysteriously as he came.

The policeman took off his helmet, mopped his brow, then said: "Now, get along wid ye. Where was yez last night?"

"At the theatre."

"Theyater, no, no! Yer a young sprig, but yer got 'em sure."

"Got what?"

"Blue devils."

I was about to make an indignant denial, when a suppressed titter reached our ears from the floor above, and looking up we saw half a dozen heads peering down at us. When they saw they were discovered the storm broke: they howled and shrieked with laughter, stamping and shouting up and down the corridor. Recognising that in some manner we had been made the victims of a practical joke, we went up. Dennis haughtily, I in a shamefaced manner.

"Bedad! Look at that now! Put down that sarpint, or Oi'le arrest ivry mither's son of yez fur carrying deadly weapons."

"What rot! Here, have a drink," and, advancing, came the man who I afterwards knew as Arthur Melton —in one hand a whisky bottle and in the other the neck of a huge snake, whose body was coiled in loose folds round him.

While Dennis was paying his respects to the bottle, the others standing round still grinning, the young fellow advanced smiling towards me, and when he did so all the little anger I still felt left me.

"I say, old chap, it was rough, I know, and we apologise. But, Great Scott, I wouldn't have missed it for a tenner!"

Here they all exploded again, while Dennis and I grinned sheepishly. After the officer had left, formal

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introductions took place, and I'm afraid they had something to do with my headache the next day.

The ice having been thus broken, I found the men about me the best natured fellows imaginable, and during the next few days one or another of them was in and out of my den continually, helping me in the disposition of the furniture and things, and taking as much interest in getting the right artistic effect as I myself.

But for the finishing touches the concensus of opinion appeared to be that I must have Bessie. Upon inquiry I found that she was a model, who, during her leisure, devoted herself to the endless wants of the "boys," stitching on buttons, keeping a check on the laundry, in fact, acting as a kind of general housekeeper.

I expected to see something ancient, but was agreeably surprised when one of the fellows brought a tall, slender girl to my room, and introduced her as Bessie. She could hardly have been more than nineteen, and with her pretty face and graceful ways she would have seemed far more at home in a father's house entertaining her guests, than living and chumming with a band of vagabonds like us. However, as she seemed to have no doubts as to the propriety and desirability of her position, I naturally fell in with the rest and soon began to regard her as a most necessary and important part of the "rookery."

Dressed in a dainty little costume, and looking as sweet and charming as nature and art could make her, she would beard the most irascible art editor in his den, and she rarely came back without having disposed of one or two at least of the drawings intrusted to her.

She had her own little private room, the walls of which were covered with the choicest bits of the boys' work, and—well, if she were good to them, they showed their appreciation of her by the thousand little attentions that help to make a woman's life pleasant, and she was always treated with the greatest respect.

I believe we were all a little smitten, and it must be pretty hard for a girl to keep the peace between ten geniuses who persist in admiring her, especially if she possibly have a secret inclination towards one of them, which, in common justice to the rest, she would have to hide. If she had any such inclination she kept it well hidden.

One night, about two weeks after I got permanently settled and before I had got really intimate with my surroundings, I was awakened by the most unearthly howls, and jumping out of bed, stood shivering in my pyjamas, bewildered, and trying to make out what it was all about. Hearing doors open, and voices in the passage, I opened mine, and found several of the fellows staring about inquiringly; finally we traced the row to Melton's room, and shouted to him through the door to know what was the matter.

We heard him floundering round inside, and presently his voice sounded.

"Quick, boys, up on the roof; it's a burglar! I can't get out; all the snakes are loose and seem to have gone clean daft!"

We hurried to the trap door in the roof, but by the time we got up our visitor had made good his escape. The flat roof was covered with snow, and his footprints showed clear enough, leading to and from Melton's skylight.

We prowled about for a few minutes, but there was no signs of the fugitive, and were just going below again when the gas, shining through the skylight, attracted one of the men, and he went and peered down.

"Come here, quick! If that don't beat Dante I'm a Dutchman," he cried.

We all crowded round, and I, at least, forgot all about my slippered feet in the snow, so great was my interest at the sight inside.

In the middle of the floor stood Melton, some kind of a woollen dressing-gown hanging about him; a violin and bow in his hands, and as he played he swayed and twisted in all directions, while round him everywhere, clinging to the pictures, on the backs of chairs, swarming over the easel, were snakes in a state of intense excitement, darting and snapping, the sound of their horrible hissing sounding at times over the wail of the music.

This continued for a while: then gradually they grew quieter. Instead of the continuous striking, they moved more sinuously and began to take long, curving and indescribably graceful poises, swinging backwards and forwards to the rythm of the music; as this grew slower they settled down in large coils, and all the excitement and hissing was over. Indeed, had we not seen their positions at first, it would have been difficult to detect their presence in the room, so still had they become.

Then the music and the motions of the man grew quieter, slower and finally ceased. He looked critically round the room, went and touched the heads of one or two of the creatures caressingly, then reached for a black bottle, and as he raised his face to drink, we saw it was quivering and ghastly, and his hand was trembling so violently he could scarcely hold the bottle. He caught sight of our faces peering down, pulled himself together, and cried:

"Hallo, you chaps! Did you see him? Come down and have a drink."

As far as we could gather, Mr. Burglar must have had a pretty bad fright; he seems to have clambered down from the top flight—of course being unaware of the eccentricities of genius. The snakes evidently spied him just as he caught sight of them. What he thought while half way down the wall on seeing a score of serpents coming after him, we shall never know! but it resulted in a howl of terror, which woke Melton, who, it appears made a habit of letting out his venomous pets at night for exercise.

The next day my curiosity led me to pay a visit to Melton's room. On entering, I found Bessie there, lying in a hammock, and appearing very much at home; while Melton stood near, smoking, and caressing one of his everlasting pets.

Melton, after proffering rum and tobacco, proceeded to show off his animals. First one, then another he brought out, handling them easily and familiarly as they coiled round him; talking to them, kissing them, as they silently, sinuously glided about him, touching his face, his neck, his throat, with their flat, vicious looking heads. Then I was formally introduced to the boa. He was, I think, the biggest serpent I have ever seen. Melton had had him ever since he was a baby, and with a few strains of music could control him, hypnotise him, so that he would stay as placed for an incredible time, fixed, silent, motionless, but for the weird motion of his tongue.

All the snakes seemed alike amenable to music; it swayed them, roused them to fierce hissing, or soothed them to trance-like quiet. And of music Melton was a master; whatever instrument he touched, and, seemingly, however he touched it, vibrated harmoniously. He played for me that day; I am fond of music and thought I understood somewhat of it, but here I was completely lost; the room was full of sighing sounds, wild, mournful and sweet, and I forgot the grinning

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skulls, the snakes and all the other oddities of his room in a perfect trance of delight.

Bessie, at first, when the music began, rose and moved about restlessly, then sat down again, and I forgot her; but, when it ceased I looked at her once more and started. She sat stiffly up, almost rigidly, gazing straight in front of her, with a strange, uncanny look in her pretty eyes. Her hands were clenched tightly in her lap, her lips slightly apart, though she hardly seemed to breathe. I turned towards Melton and caught a look of half annoyance, half anxiety, in his nervous face; he walked across the room, and rather clumsily, I thought, stumbled over a stool, bringing it down with a crash. When I recovered from my start, Bessie was rubbing her eyes and looking round as if she had just awakened.

Melton's mood seemed to change, and seizing a mahl stick, he began to poke viciously into the cages of some of the unoffending pets, and soon raised up a most horrible hissing, that successfully served to distract my attention, if such was his intent.

During the next few days I did a considerable amount of thinking. I felt quite certain that there had been something queer about Bessie that afternoon. She had had the same helpless look that the snakes had when the music obtained control over them. Could it be possible that it acted in the same manner on her, and if so, did she know it? I could not help thinking that Melton at least knew it. If so, what did it all mean?

One afternoon, about ten days later, Bessie was posing for me for some black and white illustrations. The whole place was intensely still, most of the men being out. The faint notes of a violin came from the direction of Melton's closed doors, and, I confess, the plaintive melody soothed me despite the uncanny feelings it aroused.

Bessie was sitting quieter than usual. Generally when the head was finished she kept up a pretty continuous flow of chatter and laughter; but to-day she was quite silent. Once or twice I tried to start a conversation, but met with nothing but monosyllables in return.

I was vaguely conscious of the continuance of the music for some time, but finally became so engrossed in my work that I did not notice when it ceased. Then I saw Bessie pass her hand wearily across her eyes, and, thinking she was tired, told her to rest. I looked up a moment later; she was still sitting in the same position, but there was some indefinable change in her; her whole attitude seemed one of strained eagerness, and, as I watched, her lips parted and her head inclined a little forward, as if listening intently; then suddenly her whole figure seemed to start and stiffen rigidly; she gave a half shudder and rose up, her hand to her head, and a strange, frightened look on her face.

"Yes, yes, I hear; I am coming," she muttered. I jumped up, thinking she was ill.

"Bessie, what is it?"

But she waved me to one side, walked quickly to the door, unlocked and opened it, and started down the passage, I following.

She went directly to Melton's door, opened it and entered, perhaps two feet ahead of me.

I was so surprised at her strange manner, that I naturally went in after her. She walked calmly towards the great divan in the corner, stopped for an instant, then stooped and picked up the violin and bow that lay on the floor. As she stooped, I looked beyond her and saw what her figure had hitherto hidden, and at the sight my heart seemed for one instant to stand still, then thump against my ribs with a shock that made me stagger.

On the couch, propped by pillows, sat Melton, stiff, rigid, his eyes glazed and staring, and round him coiled and slowly tightening and crushing him was Buz, the boa. Even as I looked, the reptile's head went gliding round the man's throat for a last, final grip, and the man sat inert, unconscious of his terrible danger. I gave one wild gasp, then sprang to a chair, tore down an old sword and started towards them, but with a fierce gesture Bessie waved me back, and the next instant drew the bow across the voilin.

Was I mad? This child, who could not play a note, seemed to draw the very soul out of the instrument, and, swaying from side to side, as I had seen Melton do, she moved towards the serpent.

And that horrible thing paused, seemingly puzzled, while I watched behind her in a state of excitement impossible to analyse, though I recognised even at that moment that had I attacked the reptile, I could not have got a chance at him without risking Melton's life.

Well, that girl played on and on; the same wild dirge music that Melton used to improvise throbbed through the air, and her slender body vibrated with it as she swayed backwards and forwards. The head of the snake was protruding from the under side of Melton's jaw, its attention diverted from its prey to that slight, swaying figure. It seemed like eternity while the boa poised motionless; then slowly he began to unloose those terrible coils; fold after fold was unloosened till only one remained, and from this fixed base the great boa's body curled gracefully out towards the music. But the man sat as stiff and rigid as ever, though he was free.

As I saw the snake's ugly, stealthy head drawing slowly towards the girl, I cautiously slipped past her, glancing at her, to let her know my purpose as I did so. But she never even saw me; her eyes were just like Melton's, fixed and staring, while her face was drawn and ghastly. I sidled along, well out of reach of Buz, who, however was far too intent with Bessie to notice me; then, when I was well behind him, I measured my distance, raised the sword and—swish!—Buz's head flew clean across the studio.

The body gave one or two convulsive wriggles, then the violin gave several screeches of the most villainous discord I ever heard, and the next moment Bessie was on her knees at Melton's side.

"Arthur, sweetheart, wake up! Oh, Arthur!"

Then slowly, as if in answer to the call of love, Melton came back with a shuddering sigh from—where?

Well, it was very interesting, and I stood staring with my mouth rather more open than intelligence warrants—the dead snake in one hand and the sword in the other—until I became conscious that—well, really, perhaps I was rather *de trop*; so I sneaked out on tiptoe and shut the door.

They are married now, and apparently Melton has reformed; any how the snake hobby is a thing of the past, and they live in a little flat and are very happy.

As to exactly what happened that afternoon, nobody really knows, and I doubt if anybody ever will. Melton declares that all he remembers was sitting on the divan and fiddling to the late Buz, who was poised in front of him; he recollects thinking how bright the reptile's eyes were and how steadily they looked into his.

As for Bessie, she declares she fell asleep while posing for me, and did the fiddling in a dream. So far as I can see, it seems to have been a case of love and hypnotism all round.

A. Kempster.

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A Love Sacrifice.

"Yes, Jack, I am proud of you!" she had whispered, in response to his question, his kisses were still warm on her lips, their hearts were beating in unison, though not so tumultuously as before; and now that the first rapture and thrill were over they were asking questions, and making their little confessions, after the manner of lovers on the threshold of an engagement.

"How many times have I been in love before? Now, Jack, do you think that is a fair question?" she asked, meeting his look with a roguish glance.

"Why, certainly it is, Dora," he replied earnestly. "You say you love me, so it doesn't really make any difference about the others; but I think I ought to know. Still, if there are so many of them——"

"Please stop, Jack! I won't have you saying such dreadful things and with that look on your face!" she interrupted, playfully placing her hand over his mouth, but quickly withdrawing it when he attempted to kiss it.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed, "after the way you've been talking!"

"Well, if you don't want me to say things why don't you answer my question?"

"Must I, Jack?"

"I am afraid you must, my dear."

"And you won't hate me after I tell, will you?"

"Well—"

"'That depends,' you are going to say. You needn't hesitate so long; I can read your thoughts."

"Can you? That's convenient for you, I'm sure. I wish I could read yours, then I'd know the answer to my question."

"Would you really like to know?"

"Why, yes, or I shouldn't have asked it."

"Well, Jack, if it will relieve your mind to know it, you have no predecessors."

"Are you sure, Dora?"

"Yes, Jack. You are the first and only one."

"Thank you, Dora! I'm glad to hear it; and now that question is settled we will——"

"Oh, no, my dear; you don't get off quite so easily as that; I want your confession now. About how many dozen times have you been in love?"

Jack Vernon winced. He hadn't counted on that.

"Come, young man, you are now in the witness box, sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!" she continued banteringly.

"Must I?" said Jack, helplessly repeating her question of a few minutes before.

"I am afraid you must, my dear," mimicked she.

"But I am afraid you will hate me after I confess."

"Is the record then, so long?"

"No; it is a very short one. I have never loved but once before."

"And she—she refused you?"

"No, I never asked her."

"Why not? You see, I want the whole story now."

"Because of pride. She was a wealthy heiress. I, a penniless barrister, with my fame and fortune yet to make. I loved her; I am not ashamed to say it; she was a woman that one could not help loving; she was all to me then that you are now, and——"

"And more. Go on and say it, Jack; I want the whole truth!"

"No, I won't say that, but she was the first, and love was a new sensation to me then, and if I had been her equal in wealth and station I might—but, pshaw! What is the use of telling you all this? It is all over now. Her love was not for me. I have put it aside—and, besides, I have you. But why are you looking so sober, Dora? Have I confessed too much? You wanted the whole truth, you know!"

"Yes, and I am glad you were brave enough to tell it. How long ago was it that—that this happened?" she faltered.

"Three years."

"And her name?" she asked in low tones.

"Need I tell that?"

"Yes, please," said Dora faintly.

"Edith Burton."

Dora's face grew suddenly pale.

"I thought, perhaps, she was the one," she said, in a voice that Jack scarcely recognised.

"Why, do you know her?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"I used to be at boarding school with her," answered Dora. She had regained control of her voice now. "She is a good, noble woman, far better than I am, and I don't wonder that you love her."

"You mean loved," corrected Jack. "My love for her is in the past tense, not the present."

"'True love can never die,'" quoted Dora gravely, "Wasn't it the divine William who said that? But

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here, Jack, we have talked enough of love for one evening. Don't you think so?"

"But you haven't promised to marry me yet."

"You didn't ask me that question. You simply asked me if I loved you, and you got your answer."

"And I am to take the rest for granted, eh?"

"Well, no; nothing should be taken for granted in this world. I'll give you your answer, but not now. I think I'd better send it to you in writing."

"Dear me! How formal we are getting all at once! But, after all, I think I prefer it that way! then I can carry your note next to my heart for a mascot until you are mine for good and all. Shall I run over here for it to-morrow morning?"

"No; I'll post it to you at your chambers."

"All right, Dora; and now, just one before I go!" He bent down and planted a kiss on her unresisting lips. "Thanks, dear! Now please forget that there ever was any other girl, and don't look quite so sober the next time I call. Good-night, Dora!"

"Good night, Jack!"

When Jack Vernon reached his chambers in the Temple next morning he found Dora Stevens' note awaiting him. Tearing it open he read:

DEAR JACK:—The love I expressed for you an hour ago I find has turned to pity, and I am going to make you happy by sending to you the only woman you have a right to marry. After hearing your confession, and knowing what I do, I could never be happy with you. I know you think you are in love with me, but the tendrils of your heart are still entwined around that early love, and she needs you more than I do. I told you she was my schoolmate years ago. I still regard her as one of my dearest friends, and, though we have not met for a long time, we have always kept up correspondence. I inclose my latest letter from her, received two months ago. I did not know until to-night who the man is that she loves. I know now, and I wish you both all the joy that life in each other's society can bring you. Go to her, Jack, and make her happy—and my blessing and prayers will go with you. Not good-night this time, but good-bye!

Ever your Friend
DORA.

The inclosure ran as follows:

MY DEAR DORA,—No, I am not engaged yet, and never expect to be. I have had plenty of chances to confer my hand and fortune—especially the latter—upon aspiring applicants, but I have declined them all. I have never met a man I really cared for, except one, and I know he cared for me at a time, perhaps he does yet; but, alas! he discovered that I was an heiress, and then pride (he was a young barrister, with plenty of brains and ambition, but no money) held him back. He loved me; my heart told me that; but fortune-hunters were fluttering round me, like moths about a candle, and I suppose he was afraid if he spoke he would be classed with the rest—just as though the alchemy of a woman's love could not detect the gold among the dross!

Ah, well! he is gone, and there's no use mourning for the past. I cannot help sighing, though, to think that the very money which attracted so many society moths should drive away the only man I ever loved!

There, Dora you have my secret, and know why I shall evermore a maiden be—but please don't tell. Wishing you a lover true, some time, dear Dora (not being burdened with wealth, you won't have so many unworthy ones as I) and hoping to hear from you soon, I remain, with oceans of love, yours affectionately,

EDITH BURTON.

Late that afternoon Dora Stevens received the following brief message from Jack Vernon.

MY DEAR DORA,—Many thanks for your kind note and the inclosure. There are at least two angels left on earth. You are one of them. May Heaven ever guard and bless you! Yours gratefully,

JACK.

P.S.—I start for Rochester at once, and will post this on my way to the station.

And as Dora read these words, she smiled one little, wee ghost of a smile, and whispered:

"Better my heart than hers!" H. WILSON.

"SHOULD PARSONS EAT PEAS?"

The Editor of PEARSON'S WEEKLY will give £2 2s. to the person who tells, in not more than 200 words, the best reason why they should or should not. See this week's P.W.

RESULT OF THE BOOK COMPETITION FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 9th.

Miss E. Beal, 33 Basuto Road, Poole Park, Fulham. "King Solomon's Mines." By Rider Haggard.

Mrs. Allan, 12 Sydney Street, Glasgow. "Dreamers of the Ghetto."

J. C. King, R.I. Constabulary, Maryborough, Queen's Co "Origin of Species." By Darwin.

Richard Keddy, 94 Milbourne Street, Carlisle. "Helps to the Bible."

Geo. Hunt, 24 Hinckley Road, Nuneaton. "Sankey's Songs and Solos Music Book."

Thos. Simon, 13 Hauteville, Guernsey. "All About Book-keeping" (Ward and Lock).

"Pick-Me-Up."

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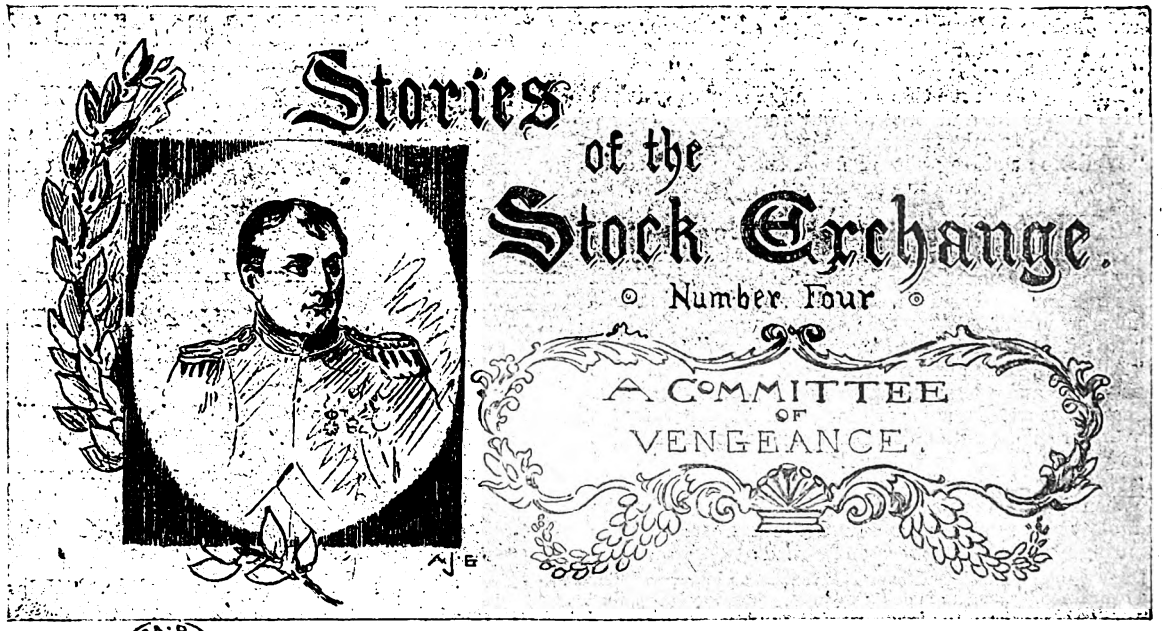

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Unearthed and Re-Edited by Robert Machray.

I.

It was between midnight and one o'clock of a February morning, in the year 1814, that the landlord, guests, and servants of the "Ship" tavern, then the principal inn in Dover, were awakened by a loud knocking at the front door.

So insistent was the clamour that in a very short time "mine host" appeared at an upper window, and demanded who it was that disturbed the peace of His Majesty's lieges at that ghostly hour with such unghostly noise.

Standing in front of the inn was a figure almost hidden by the darkness. In a clear voice he informed the landlord that he had just come from France with important dispatches, and that it was a matter of the greatest urgency that he should at once procure post-horses and a carriage to proceed to London for the speedy delivery of the letters he carried with him.

"Is it good news you bring?" asked the landlord.

"Ay, that it is," replied the figure.

Descending hastily, the worthy landlord withdrew the bolts that secured the door, and admitted the traveller. Holding up a lantern in his hand, he gazed at the stranger with much curiosity.

The light disclosed a tall, somewhat military-looking man. He was dressed in a long, grey overcoat, and on his head he wore a gold-laced cap. When he unbuttoned his heavy coat he was seen to be wearing some kind of uniform. It was also noticed that his clothes were wet up to his middle, as if he had either been wading through the water, or had been drenched with the surf of the sea.

"I am Colonel de Bourgh, aide-de-camp to Lord Cathcart."

This he said in reply to the inquiring looks of the landlord, who had now been joined by several of the inmates of the house. For good news from France was what every good Briton was dying to hear at that time.

The armies of the Allies, it must be remembered, were hemming in the great and hitherto invincible Napoleon. It was known that he had been defeated, and that his position was well nigh desperate. Still, there was a fear that the genius of the world's greatest soldier might triumph after all, and overcome the tremendous combination that had been formed against him. It was now known, however, that the Allies were almost in sight of Paris, and that a decisive battle might take place at any moment.

Hence the interest in the news that the stranger might bring.

"May I ask your honour," asked the landlord, "what are the tidings, or is the matter secret?"

"No secret, surely," said De Bourgh; "'tis the best of all possible news. But spare me, I pray you; the need for haste is great. Do you order for me a post-chaise and horses while I have some refreshment. I landed an hour ago."

"Landed an hour ago!" exclaimed the landlord. "Did your honour not land at the quay?"

"Nay, I cannot tell you exactly how I came; that, indeed, must be kept close—you understand. I may say, though, that I was landed about two miles from here on the beach, and got wet, as you may see, in the process."

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The landlord turned away to do the bidding of the stranger. A commercial traveller, who was stopping at the inn, now asked De Bourgh if he would not be kind enough to so far gratify their curiosity as to tell them what had actually happened.

"Well, I do not think that it will do any harm to inform you that the war is over, for Napoleon is dead."

"Napoleon dead!" responded the other, with a world of glad surprise in the tones of his voice; "that is good news indeed."

"Yes; he is dead; his body cut in pieces—ay, scrambled for by the savage Cossacks who slew him."

"Horrible, horrible," cried the commercial. "Where was it that this took place?"

"*That* I scarcely think it right to tell. And yet, why not?"

"'Twill bring home the news to us all so much the more if your honour will but condescend to give us so much of the story of his death as you think is right."

"Well, then, you must know that there have been fights not a few, ay, great and bloody battles, the scene of which lies not many leagues from Paris. Sachen, Schwartzenburg, and Blücher, like dogs after their quarry, have been biting at his heels, and springing upon his flanks and shoulders. At length he was forced to stand at bay, and in the most dreadful battle you can imagine his army was overwhelmed, and he himself killed by the Cossacks of Sachen. As I told you, the enraged soldiers showed him no mercy, but cut his body into a thousand pieces, as if to glut their fury with this so barbarous revenge."

"'Tis almost too good to be true!" was the involuntary exclamation of one who listened.

De Bourgh looked at the speaker fiercely.

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" said he. "Ah, well," continued he with a shrug of his shoulders, "it will be no news soon, for in another day or two it will be all over the country. Perhaps," said he, turning to an attendant who had just come into the room with a tray on which were placed cold meat, bread, and other provisions for supper, "you will bring me some ink and writing paper. No time must be lost in acquainting the Admiral at Deal with the glorious intelligence. He can then communicate with London by telegraph, if the day be fine, and presently every joy bell in the city will be set a-ringing."

While De Bourgh was hurriedly dispatching the meal which had been set before him, the landlord entered to say that the chaise and horses were now ready. Then writing materials were brought in, the letter to the Admiral written, and sent by a trusty messenger to his residence at Deal.

Pulling out some napoleons from his pocket, De Bourgh asked the landlord what he owed him, and tendered two of them in payment of his bill. When the boniface rather demurred at the foreign money, De Bourgh said that it did not matter, and forthwith produced a note of the Bank of England. Having received the change, in another minute or so he had

In a clear voice he informed the landlord that he had just come from France with important dispatches.

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entered the carriage, and was on his way to Canterbury, where, at an inn called the "Fountain," he changed horses.

Here his postboys, who were known at the "Fountain," smoothed matters for him, and after a brief halt he was thundering along the road to Sittingbourne, where, at the "Rose" of that place, he procured fresh horses. Without delay, he continued his journey, and reached Rochester.

His postboys had taken him to the "Crown," and at first he experienced a difficulty in getting a change of horses. Some few minutes were spent by him in the tavern, and its landlord made bold to ask De Bourgh if by any chance he might be in a position to tell him what was the most recent news from France. Whereupon De Bourgh repeated what he had told the landlord of the "Ship" at Dover.

"Great news—great news!" So huge was his delight that he refused to accept anything for the trouble De Bourgh had put him to.

"Nay, nay," said he, "I should think myself but a mean fellow if I received aught from you who are the bearer of such splendid intelligence."

One result of this short conversation was that the landlord had observed, as De Bourgh was warming himself at the fire, and had unloosed his overcoat so as to get the full effect of the heat, that De Bourgh was wearing a military uniform, across the breast of which was a scarf, and, also, beside it, a star, as of some order or decoration.

The chaise having come at length to the front of the inn, De Bourgh entered it, and directed the postboys to go on with all speed to Dartford, which, as everybody knows, is no great distance from London. Everything proved favourable for the journey, and Dartford was reached in due time. From this point he went more slowly, as the morning light was now more clear. Soon afterwards he dismissed the chaise, having first inquired where he was likely to get a hackney carriage.

Having obtained what he sought, a hackney coach, he made his way to the Marsh Gate, Lambeth, where presently he disappeared.

Before he dismissed his postboys he had given them wine and money, and at the same time had told them the wonderful news he brought about Napoleon, saying that there was no secrecy about the matter, and that they might tell it to anybody they pleased.

The light disclosed a tall, somewhat military-looking man.

II.

About ten o'clock the same morning, knots of brokers and dealers were gathered about the Stock Exchange, the adjacent courts, and the approaches to it. At the close of business on the preceding Saturday, the market had, on the whole, been quiet and dull. If there was any tendency at all, it was in the direction of lower prices. Omnium had closed from 26½ to 27 premium.

They were discussing somewhat freely and eagerly the various items which had appeared in that morning's *Times* and *Post*, with respect to the movements of the Allies on their march to Paris, which was still held for Napoleon by the Empress Queen and Regent, the Austrian Archduchess, who had been wedded by her father to the "Little Corsican."

There were different opinions expressed as to how soon or how long it would be before the Dread of Europe was overthrown, but all were

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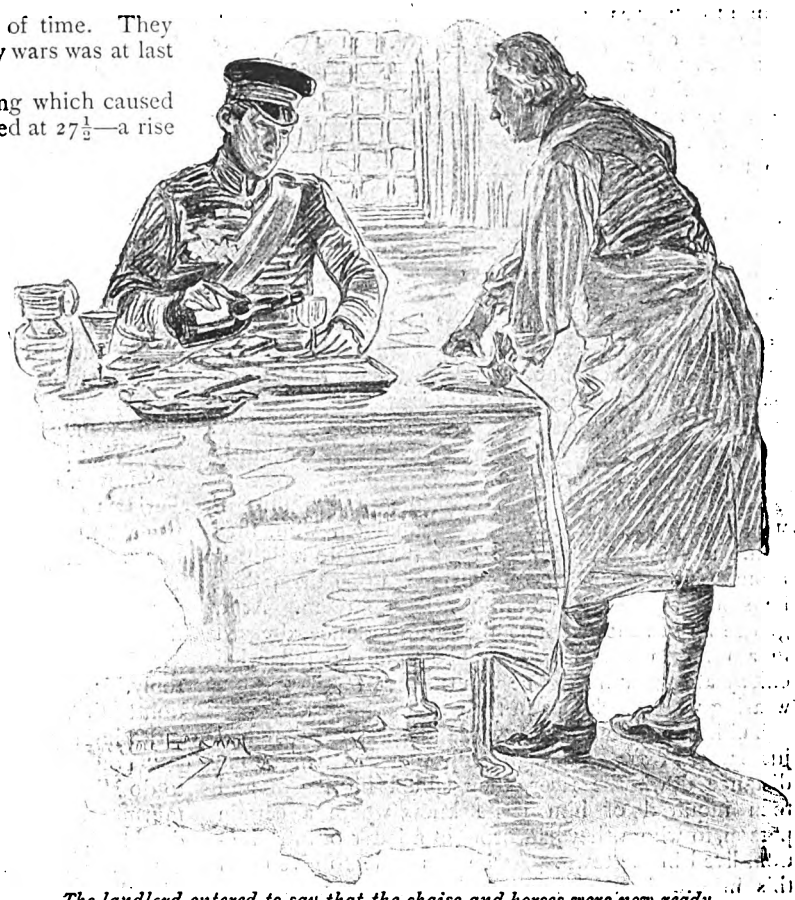
agreed that it was now only a matter of time. They all agreed that the end of these bloody wars was at last well in sight.

It was probably this universal feeling which caused the first prices of Omnium to be quoted at 27½—a rise of nearly a full point from the previous Saturday.

It was about half-past ten when one of those sudden inexplicable waves of feeling for which the Stock Exchange is famous suddenly passed over the members. What caused it was not at first quite clear. That it was something good was, however, sufficiently obvious, as the bidding for Omnium quickly became clamorous, while the price of it was raised at a bound up to 30, 30½, 31.

Now a crowd on the Stock Exchange is a good deal like any other crowd, and acts precisely in the same way. Just as a great body of people frequently come together, and is swayed in a particular direction without much rhyme or reason, so the various units of this crowd on 'Change acted together, as if moved by a common impulse. There seemed to be good news, prices were rising, and everyone was anxious to be in the swim.

The first excitement over, and the upward movement of the Funds having stopped for a time, they had leisure to make inquiries as to what had caused this remarkable buoyancy in the National Securities. And it was easy enough to find out what had occurred.



The landlord entered to say that the chaise and horses were now ready.

Shortly after the opening of the Stock Exchange expresses had arrived from Dover in hot haste with the extraordinary but most welcome intelligence that Napoleon, the great disturber of peace, and therefore of all the movements of money in the market, had not only been utterly defeated, but that he himself had been slain. No wonder was it then that a considerable rise had taken place in the Funds, for never, surely, had there ever been received a better piece of news.

Many questions, of course, were asked as to the manner in which the news had been brought to town. So far as could be made out, a courier with dispatches, a colonel in the army, had landed at Dover late on the preceding night, and had brought the amazing intelligence. The dress, bearing, and position of the messenger were all such, it was declared, as to place the tidings beyond doubt.

As soon as the messenger could procure horses he had set out for London, so it was said, but not before he had sent a communication to the port admiral at Deal telling him of what had taken place. These expresses from Dover said that they had been so joyously affected by what they had heard that they had set out immediately for London, and they expressed some surprise that nothing had been seen of the courier from France, the military gentleman, who had gone on ahead of them in the postchaise. At first, however, there was not much attention given to this aspect of the affair.

Another hour passed quickly away. One or two of the more critical members went to the Lord Mayor, and asked if he had received any confirmation of the report. He replied that nothing had reached him directly, but that he understood that some sort of message had been received from Admiral Foley at Deal by telegraph, which certainly appeared to give a greater body of colour to the statement. For himself, he said, he was not quite convinced, as it was a time of endless rumours and counter rumours.

By noon, a feeling of doubt had sprung up. The Funds began to show some signs of dropping again. The members of the Stock Exchange were no longer all of the same opinion, and the two sides, into which it is generally divided, the "Bulls" and the "Bears," were once more in evidence.

So matters stood, when another wind of excitement arose, and in another minute or two, amidst a

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tumult of voices, in a hideous and indescribable din, the price of Omnium was freely given at 33—nearly six points of a rise from the last quotations of the previous Saturday.

There was, to be sure, a special reason for this new outbreak, this frenzy to buy the Funds. All doubt as to the death of the hated Napoleon appeared to be completely dissipated by its being substantiated from what seemed an entirely different, and probably trustworthy, source.

III.

It was about six o'clock of that same Monday morning, while as yet the dawn had hardly come, when two French officers landed at Northfleet from a six-oared gig, which had made its way mysteriously up the river in the darkness. When they had been put ashore, the boat immediately put off, and was instantly swallowed up in the gloom.

Repairing forthwith to an inn, the whereabouts of which they seemed sufficiently acquainted with, they found a sleepy waiter, who took them into a lighted room. No sooner did his eyes rest upon them than he stood agape and trembling before them. At a glance he saw they were people of importance, dressed in a uniform which was strange to him; but what chiefly attracted his notice was the fact that they were wearing white cockades in their military caps.

Telling him that they were friends, and that they had just landed from a foreign ship that was lying some distance down the river, they stilled his alarm, and then inquired of him if he knew where a certain person, to whom they had brought a letter of introduction, lived in the town. As he was able to give them this information, he readily did so, saying, however, that it was too early surely for them to disturb him. To this they replied that their business was of so urgent a character that, early as it was, they must immediately go and find him if that were possible.

It had now become somewhat lighter, and the waiter standing at the door of the inn, directed them how to go, but they had scarcely got out of his sight before they quickened their steps to a run, and made for the house where they were going without any hesitation or difficulty as to the way.

The person whom they sought was still abed, but, telling his servant that his master would on this occasion certainly forgive his being aroused from sleep, they bade him call him at once, and at the same time gave him the letter of introduction, saying: "This will sufficiently excuse our intrusion at this untimely hour."

Some ten minutes later, the gentleman appeared, holding in his hand the letter they had brought. It was easy to see that he had been somewhat suddenly awakened from slumber, as, while his face indicated that he was greatly pleased, his eyes still had an air of sleepiness about them.

"You gentlemen brought me this letter, I presume," said he. "'Tis from my old friend M. Replessis, and I am so much his debtor that I will do anything within my power to serve him. He informs me that you bring news of a very special nature, but he preferred that you should tell me it by word of mouth, rather than that he should do so by means of a letter."

He looked at them with keen inquiry, taking in both their dress and looks with the greatest interest.

"M. Replessis is also a good friend of ours, and he assured us that no one was more likely than yourself to forward the matter which we have in hand."

"And that is?"

"We desire to get to London with the utmost speed. We are the bearers of a great piece of news which will gratify many people, and these not English people alone, but also many of our own countrymen."

The stranger spoke with a strong foreign accent, and interlarded his speech with several French phrases as he went along.

"What has happened?"

"Much," he replied. "The Allies are victorious, Paris is now occupied by them; but the most important thing of all is that Napoleon is dead, and that our sovereign, Louis XVIII., is now master of France."

"Bonaparte dead!" was the exclamation. "Can that indeed be true, gentlemen?"

"There is no doubt whatever about it," was the reply. "Our object, indeed, is to take that information to the English Ministry. There could be nothing more important, could there?"

"You are right. Now, what is it that you wish me to do?" But even as he asked them the question he murmured to himself, like one in a dream, "Napoleon dead! Napoleon dead!"

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to arrange at once with the keeper of some livery stable, whom you will doubtless know, to take us to London with all convenient haste. We are strangers here, and know not the way. Will you do this for us?"

"With pleasure," he replied. "You will allow me to offer you some slight refreshment, while you wait, and I will myself go at once and order horses and a carriage for you. There shall be no delay, I assure you."

He was as good as his word, but an hour had nearly passed before all was in readiness, and it was now broad daylight. When they descended to the carriage, they saw that the horses had been decked with laurel. In this way the friend of M. Replessis showed how highly he esteemed the news which had been brought.

They journeyed on to London by way of Shooter's Hill without mishap, although there were not a few whom they passed on the road who were greatly struck by their appearance, and also by the triumphal garnishing of their horses.

It was just a little after noon when that identical postchaise with the laurel-bedecked horses drove slowly over London Bridge. The two French officers in it distributed billets to the crowd, who wondered what was the meaning of the appearance of this extraordinary portent in the city. Suddenly there was a

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The waiter standing at the door of the inn, directed them how to go.

great shout of joy, of unmistakable gladness, for they had seen written on these billets the statements that Paris had fallen before the armies of the Allies, and that Napoleon was dead.

"Napoleon is dead!"

This was the cry that went surging along the streets. It was taken up here, there, everywhere. It flew from mouth to mouth. The words were swift winged, and sped about all over the town.

The French officers in the postchaise next paraded through Cheapside and Fleet-street, passed over Blackfriars Bridge, then drove rapidly to the Marsh Gate, Lambeth—where, it will be remembered, De Bourgh had also gone some two hours previously. Here they disappeared, exactly as he had done.

IV.

That echoing cry, "Napoleon is Dead," had not gone all round London without being heard in the Stock Exchange. Indeed, it was this that had brought about the second advance in Omnium, until it had reached the highest point of the day. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon, however, there began to appear well marked signs of a reaction in the market. Some of those who had been most eager buyers commenced to wonder—for the joy of the Stock Exchange is never very distant from its gloom—if what they had heard were true.

As the hours wore on no confirmation came. The ministers of the Government sent word that they

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had received no intelligence of Napoleon's death, or of the fall of Paris, and that they were inclined to believe that the whole affair was nothing more than a plot, a tissue of falsehoods woven purely and simply for the purpose of influencing the price of the Funds.

Before the day was over this was the general opinion—so swiftly do ideas change. Omnium declined severely, losing nearly the whole of the augmented price. There were many losers by the day's operations. They were loud in their threats. They had been laughed at, mocked, deceived—bought and sold like a flock of silly sheep.

Next day doubt was at an end. It was known that Paris had not fallen, and that Napoleon was not dead, but still fighting, although against tremendous odds. The newspapers came out with the whole story, and denounced the plot as the most scandalous and infamous imposition ever perpetrated upon the Stock Exchange. The committee of that institution formed itself into one of vengeance, and immediately took steps to ferret out the authors of the conspiracy.

On the eventful Monday there had been sold large quantities both of Omnium and of the 3 per cents. These transactions had been mainly at the instance of a well-known firm of brokers. A little investigation served to show that this firm had dealt in the Funds on that day for an amount which, in round figures, came to a million sterling.

Feeling in the matter was so strong among the members of the Stock Exchange that the firm in question would have been forced to divulge the names of their principals, had it not been that, in the ordinary course of business, they had in any case to do so. But when the Committee found amongst these principals the name of one of the most distinguished servants of the Crown, and a relation of his, they were half inclined at first to let the matter rest.

The affair, however, had by this time become so public that its future was practically taken out of their hands; they were compelled to go on, though now with caution and secrecy. For it had transpired that those chiefly concerned in the plot were no other than Lord Cochrane and a nephew of his.

There was no want of evidence as to the appearance and dress of those who had been guilty of carrying out the conspiracy.

The innkeepers at Dover and Rochester, the commercial traveller who had spoken to De Bourgh at the "Ship," the postboys who had conducted De Bourgh along the various stages of his route to London, the driver of the hackney coach who had dropped him at the Marsh Gate, Lambeth, the gentleman at Northfleet who had been imposed upon by a letter, which, of course, had been forged, from his friend, M. Replessis, and several others who had seen either De Bourgh or the other party in the course of their travels—all these either came forward as witnesses, or were gradually hunted down.

The problem was, how was De Bourgh to be connected with so illustrious a personage as Lord Cochrane? Who was De Bourgh?

Meanwhile a process, which can only be described as one of bribery and corruption, had been going on with respect to the servants of Lord Cochrane and his nephew. Through this channel it was ultimately discovered that on that very Monday a man dressed as a French officer, or in some sort of foreign uniform, had called in the forenoon at Lord Cochrane's house in Green-street. The name of this person, however, was declared to be not De Bourgh, but De Berenger.

De Berenger was tracked down, was identified by the Dover innkeeper as De Bourgh, was arrested on charge of being concerned in a fraudulent conspiracy, and thrown into prison.

Shortly afterwards Lord Cochrane and several others who had either profited by the plot on the Stock Exchange, or who had been proved to be actually concerned in its working out, were seized and sent to the King's Bench prison.

The arrest of so eminent a man as Lord Cochrane, who had rendered great services to the country by the splendid deeds he had performed against the enemy at sea, created a profound and painful sensation throughout the land. It was understood, however, that he emphatically declared that he was entirely innocent of any complicity in the whole affair. He had been in the habit, he said, of buying and selling the public Funds, but merely in the way of speculation, as any other gentleman might do.

At the trial which took place in June of that year, it was shown that Lord Cochrane, his nephew, and one or two others for whom Omnium had been sold at the given time, were in such a position that they would have been heavy losers on their accounts with their brokers if no rise had taken place in Omnium exactly at that very date.

As witness after witness was produced for the prosecution, their testimony was so condemning that it was soon seen that the verdict of the jury could scarcely be other than that of "guilty."

And such was their verdict.

Some days after their finding sentence was pronounced. Lord Cochrane, De Berenger, and four others were given twelve months imprisonment in the Marshalsea, and at the same time Lord Cochrane was fined one thousand pounds, and two others were also mulcted in considerable sums.

Now comes the strangest part of this story, which is taken with but slight change from the journals of the time. It was subsequently proved conclusively that Lord Cochrane had no part whatever in the plot. De Berenger in the end owned up. He had merely gone to Lord Cochrane's house as a blind. It had been known that Lord Cochrane speculated in the funds, and advantage was taken of this to implicate him in the affair in the hope that his great name might shield the others, perhaps, in the event of anything untoward taking place.

Lord Cochrane in after days took his proper place among the heroes of the English race, as the Earl of Dundonald, and lies buried in Westminster Abbey.

(*Next week: "In Twenty-four Hours."*)

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TRACKED!

"Our last day together," she said. "Well, it's been a good time, hasn't it? I wonder how many people at the lake are saying the same thing?"

"Inanity of inanities, all is inanity," I replied sententiously. Then I stopped to think whether I had said something bright, and stopped so long that my cigar went out.

Her lips curled. "And because the preacher was wise."

I had never seen her sneer before in the whole week of our acquaintance. But, when you come to think of it, when a girl is kittenish, she is likely, as a rule, to have claws. We were sitting in a skiff under the trees at Lake Geneva. The lake lay like a great sheet of cerulean glass, and no breeze stirred the sweltering August afternoon. There was a rattle of dishes and the sound of laughter from the recesses of the island where we were moored. That was the way I was able to fix the time of day, for my watch was in my coat, and it was too much trouble to get it.

"The aggravating part of a woman is that she keeps cool on a hot day," I said. Then I wondered if she would comprehend the sarcasm. I lit my cigar.

"The aggravating part of a man is—the man," she replied angrily. She did not look cool then.

"To return to our starting point—it has been a good time, hasn't it?"

She said nothing. What came next was more her fault than mine. When a girl says nothing, she knows the man has to say something.

"Don't you wish there could be more of it?" I continued, wishing at that moment that flirtations did not fall into grooves.

"It's been very pleasant. I always did love the lake."

"Is the lake the only thing you?"

"It's the only thing I ever said I—"

"But it never asked you; and the other things must—"

"Shall we be moving on?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Not yet," I said sternly. I was beginning to forget it was hot. She was pulling a rose to pieces, and when I caught hold of her hand I pricked my finger. Then, of course, I called her by her Christian name, and went through the time-honoured formula. I did not succeed in kissing her, but she seemed thankful that no boats were passing. She glanced nervously round to make sure of it. Her face froze, but I got the impression that it was by a muscular effort rather than by exercise of righteous indignation.

"Take me back, if you please, Mr. Killeen."

"Is there no——?"

"How dare you?" she said (and I began to think she really was angry). "Engaged as you are—"

She stopped and blushed. In my astonishment I as nearly as possible gave myself away on the spot. I saved myself, though.

"Engaged!" I said. "What on earth do you mean? I never loved anyone but you."

"From what I have seen of you I should imagine that made very little difference to your engagement. Do you think I am blind? You've got letters every day at breakfast addressed in the same hand-writing."

"My sister's letters," forgetting how aged was the ruse.

"How fond your sister must be of you!" It was the second time she had sneered. "Unfortunately, you told me yesterday you had no sisters."

I had to fence then. "Well, for all you know I may be married." I had moored the skiff, and we were on our way back.

"Yes, but I happen to know you are engaged." And again she blushed confusedly.

"You know!" I exclaimed faintly.

"You have been engaged to Miss Minnie Heilig just seven months, if you wish me to be precise."

That was all. I taunted her, implored her, besought her, but to no purpose. I was as much in the dark when we reached the hotel as when she astonished me by telling the truth. When I spoke to her she would not answer.

What I needed most was stimulant—I could see that. When I got to the bar I met Harry Day.

"What, you?" he said. "Let's have something. What's yours?"

We had five of them and I felt no difference.

"By the way, old man, what in the name of the seven Sutherland sisters were you doing in a skiff with Maud Conway?"

"Never heard of her."

"Oh, come old man; I saw you, you know."

I was not listening much to what he said.

"Her name's Fanny Keene," I said absently. In reply he roared out laughing till I was driven out of my dreaminess.

"What the dickens are you laughing at?"

"You don't mean to say you don't know who she is?"

"I know nothing about her except that she is the nicest girl I—well, look here, Day, if you want to keep friends with me you'd better not say anything against that lady's character."

Day stopped laughing. "You don't mean to say you've knocked about London all this time without knowing—'s cleverest female 'tec. Why, she was the chief witness in the Leslie divorce case; she brought the kleptomania business home to Mrs. Austen,—she—"

He ran through a whole list of the dirty linen that had been washed in public during the past year or two. I heard him with a dizzy swimming in my head.

"What are you doing, Killeen? What on earth is she after you for?"

It came to me like a flash. The door stood open at the end of the passage. Beyond there was a seat out on the lawn, and a figure in a white gown on it. I heard Day's voice, "Don't be a fool, man! What are you going to do?" I was upon the lawn almost before he had finished his sentence.

"I know now how you discovered my engagement," I said between my teeth. She answered with her face covered with her hands.

"Luke, forgive me."

"Good-bye," I said.

"She was jealous. Forgive her, too. If she loves you as I do, you ought not to blame her."

"Good-bye," I said.

"Luke! I could not help it. They—they sent me down here. I never knew till it came to our last day what it was going to cost me——"

"Good-bye," I said again. She never raised her head. I felt glad it was twilight.

Reffell Naye.

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A MAN'S MISTAKE.

Through the sighing boughs of the Australian bush there came drifting the hum as of a million bees set in rhythmic tone and tune. It was a great saw at Foley's mill flashing its merciless disc of steel through the logs. Foley himself sat on a low bench, his throat bare, his head leaning against a tree, watching through his slightly opened lids the swift movements of the men at the saw.

The girl who came up noiselessly behind him thrust her small fingers over his forehead and opened the lids of his eyes.

"Wake up, Dave, and take me out in the boat for a row in the shade. The house is hotter than a furnace."

"How did you get here?" said Foley indolently.

"I walked across the logs."

"I wish you wouldn't do that, Lize," said Foley with a frown. "Some day you'll get on a loose one and go under, and the logs will hold you fast."

"I'm too sure footed," laughed Lize, coquettishly thrusting out a slippered foot. "Come on, Dave."

"Oh, it's too warm for such exercise. Ask Langham to go with you. Here he comes." Foley looked up in time to see the curious sidewise glance from the girl's eyes.

"What did you look at me like that for, Lize?" he said suddenly.

"Like what?" she said. Without waiting for an answer she tripped to Langham.

"Dave is lazy and contrary," she said, pouting her pretty lips. "He says, won't you take me down the river in the boat?"

Langham lifted his hat to her. His dark eyes glanced from Foley to the girl with a cynical light that melted into something tender as it rested upon Lize's primrose face.

"With pleasure, Mrs. Foley. Good afternoon to you both. Foley, did you ever feel such a heat in the bush?"

"Not often in Australia," said Foley, shifting his straw hat over his eyes to shut out the glare. "There'll be a storm, a regular scorcher in a day or two."

"No sign of it now," said Lize, glancing at the yellow sky.

"Where is the boat?" queried Langham.

Foley nodded sleepily towards the landing—a platform of logs.

"Down there," he said. "Lize will show you."

Through motionless lids he watched them as they rowed away. His wife blew him a kiss from the tips of her dainty fingers. Far down the river her white dress gleamed like a darting heron under the arched boughs.

The sun had dropped ere the mill shut down for the night. Two of the hands lingered to light their pipes and gossip.

"Foley's gone. Didn't wait for her."

"Foley's a fool. Ketch me sendin' my wife out for a row with a fellow like that Langham. Did you see how he looked at her?"

"Soft on her, hey?"

"And I fancy she is on him," said the other, shrugging his shoulders.

They passed on oblivious of Foley's white face staring at them from the engine-room.

Had Lize been wise or observant she would have caught the ominous calm in Foley's voice as he laid his hand on her shoulder that night.

"Lize, I've been thinking it don't look exactly right, your going so often with that fellow."

"Indeed!" said Lize, her lips curling. "Gentleman is a better word than fellow, Mr. Foley."

"I don't know," said Foley slowly. "Gentlemen don't fall in love with other men's wives."

"Who said so?"

Her face grew suddenly white. Foley's hand tightened its grasp.

"You'd better be careful, Lize. I'll have my way in this. I forbid you to go on the river with Langham again."

"You were the one who sent me! Take your hand off—it hurts! I don't know whether I'll obey such a tyrant or not!"

She fled into the little parlour and Foley heard the bolt slip in the door.

Two days of sultry weather passed, during which the boat remained tied to its tree, the rope swaying in the water undisturbed. Langham, whose vagrant fancy had led him to fit up a rude hut on the south end, did

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not come down to the mill. Foley hoped he would stay away. There was a feeling in the tips of Foley's fingers that would have been relieved could they have rested on Langham's throat.

The sky had grown black with clouds that Saturday evening, and through the trees there came the breath of the storm. The men had left the mill, and Foley, standing midway on the unsteady bridge, swept the heavens with his long glass. He lowered it to watch a snipe in combat with a fellow fowl. A cry broke from his lips; he looked through the glass with an eye keen with fury. There, far down the river, he saw Langham draw Lize towards him and kiss her.

Without waiting to see more, Foley went leaping to the bank like a madman. On, on, up to his house and into the tiny sitting-room. A pearl handled bit of steel lay upon the mantelpiece. He snatched it up and thrust it into his pocket. The cold steel chilled his blood, and the face of Lize looked at him from a rough wooden frame. Foley fell upon his knees and threw the weapon from him.

The storm that had been brewing all the day broke at evening in all its fury. Langham in his cosy cabin heard the outside thunderstorm as in a dream. There was a tempest in his heart—his brain, and the touch of her lips lingering still. Suddenly the door flew open in a burst of rain, and he saw a drenched figure enter the cabin and sink to the ground sobbing and shivering.

"Oh, take me, take me away from here! Take me away—anywhere, Dave struck me—he saw you kiss me, and he will never forgive me."

Langham stroked her wet hair tenderly.

"You are safe with me," he said. "You shall come with me."

"I wish I had not gone with you," she sobbed, yet clinging to him. "I am so cold."

Langham placed her in a chair and found a great shawl to wrap round her; he knelt before her and began to chafe her hands. The September rain was chill and her blue little face was quivering like a child's.

Not until he heard her cry did Langham look up to see Foley standing in the room, his great arms folded upon his breast. Langham sprang to the shelf where his pistol lay, but Foley had a powerful hand upon his arm.

"Not that! If I had wanted to shoot you I would not have given you a chance for life. I've come to talk with you. What are you going to do? I gave her the choice—and she came here."

Langham's face burnt dull scarlet, but Foley's eyes were like steady steel.

"She's been my wife, but I want no woman that don't want me. Still, I can't see her go to ruin! I'll kill her first. She was a baby in a basket cradle when the river floated her to my cabin door. She's been all the world to me ever since. I haven't been so soft-spoken or so loving, but I gave her my name, my love, my respect. Can you do that for her? Or do you want her at all?"

It was a curious, pathetic scene. The girl in the chair stared at Foley, but Langham's face was troubled.

"I love her," he said slowly. "I am willing to take her, but she is innocent now of all but folly. I swear to you, Foley," he added with sudden passion.

"So much the better if you love each other. Now, listen. I am going away this night—no matter where. She can get her freedom in a little while. I won't bother you—unless you cast her off or break her heart! Then, by Heaven, I'll follow you and kill you inch by inch!"

For one moment Foley's eyes blazed their threat into Langham's heart. Then he was gone into the night without one word for Lize.

"He is gone," she said in a dull tone.

Langham bent and kissed her face. Lize pushed him back from her.

"I shall never see him any more!" she cried in a tone of anguish.

"No, you shall be all my own now."

Lize sprang to her feet; her eyes flashed a strange, amberlight upon him.

"I don't love you. I hate you! I know now that I love Dave. I want Dave! I am his wife! I am sorry I kissed you and came to you. Oh, Heaven! Dave, Dave, forgive me! Dave, Dave, I want you!" And freeing herself from his grasp she rushed into the storm.

Foley, working like a madman at his trunk, heard a light step upon the little porch. His heart leapt in a sickening throb as Lize crept into the room and stood trembling by the hearth.

"Well?" he said sternly, through his teeth, "has Langham driven you from him?"

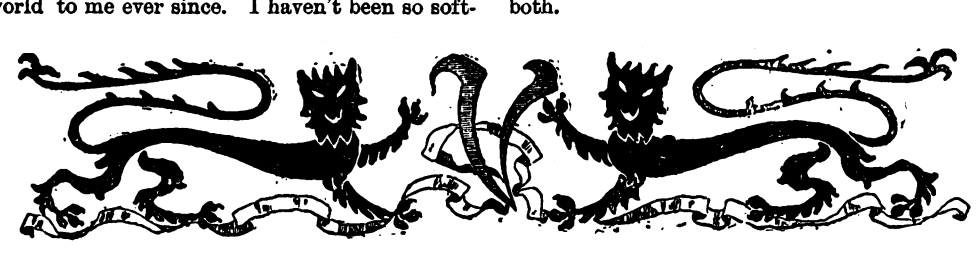
"Dave, Dave! Oh, will you please let me stay with you? I will not ask more; only just to stay with you? I did not know I loved you until to-night. You were not like a lover, Dave. You treated me like a child; and I was a woman, who wanted love and sweet words. I hate him, I told him so, and he tried to keep me back; but I had to come to you. I have been wicked—I let him kiss me!"

Her voice died in her throat. Foley caught her by the arms.

"Yes, it is all my fault. I made a mistake. And I struck you!" he said hoarsely. "Can you forgive that?"

"Oh, yes!" she sobbed, her lips touching his rough hand. Foley caught her in his arms and turned her face towards the lamp. In her eyes he saw the "light that never was on sea or land." In his long, silent kiss the past was buried, and a lovely future dawned for both.

H. T. P.



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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

He goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France, Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. All the Europeans in China are massacred, and when John Hardy gets there he is brought before Yen How, who discovers that the English boy has kissed Ada Seward.

They quarrel, and Hardy fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (they are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison. Ni-ching-tang is Foo-chee's father (although Sin-wan does not know this), and one of the scullions of Yen How's kitchen. John Hardy is cruelly tortured by Sin-wan, acting under Yen How's instructions. Ni-ching-tang, Foo-chee's father, discovers that Sin-wan has murdered his son and Ah-lin. He then goes in revenge and drugs Sin-wan, and enables John Hardy to escape in a boat to Kiao-Chau. The British warship *Iphigenia*, which escaped from the Japanese ships in the last battle, is run ashore at Kiao-Chau, now occupied by the Chinese. The British take possession of the fort and hold it against the Celestials.

John Hardy arrives at the island, and in due course propounds a scheme for escaping by taking possession of one of the deserted ships in a Chinese port, and manning her with the wrecked sailors of the *Iphigenia*.

CHAPTER XXIII. (*continued*).

"July 4th.—Here we are, every man Jack of us, on board a very smart and spanking little German barque called the *Conrad*, a thing of about 400 tons, and we making straight for Nagasaki, God only knows what for. However, everybody in the best of spirits, and the lads ready for any game. This man Hardy, is, in my opinion, as wild a creature as ever drew the breath of life, and yet it would be a lie if I say that I have not every confidence in his leadership, for I have. The *Conrad* is very high out of the water, and is scudding along before a good stiff breeze from the N.W., with the foam singing past the level of her weather bulwarks, and her deck too steep to walk on without gripping hold of things. She's got nothing in her but ballast, and not too much of that. So away we fly, under all plain sail and courses—a tidy spread of canvas for this light thing—but toward what? I am surprised at the lads: they don't seem to be asking themselves that question. The nineteen who went to Chefoo have got a fine old tale to tell of the capture of the *Conrad*, which they accomplished at about ten at night, without the least trouble. There was nobody aboard of her but an old Chinese woman, and one of those frizzy dogs that the Chinese eat. Not content with the ship and her three boats, Hardy boarded two other ships in the port, and seized three more boats; so that, counting the pinnace, we have got seven boats in all, which is not bad for a little nipper like this. What is troubling me is the thought of provisions; we have not enough to last us another three days at the present rate of going on. The ship is packed with men, and very far from packed with food. It is true, we should be in sight of Nagasaki by sun-down to-morrow, if this breeze lasts. But how in the name of Providence we are to get provisions at Nagasaki, even if we are not blown to the devil by some little Japanese gun-boat, is what I don't see. It isn't that I mistrust Hardy; there can be no doubt that he has a head-piece, and can lead. But I am a prudent man, and this looks to me like the wildest and maddest voyage that ever was made by any crew which ever put to sea.

"July 5th, one p.m—Breeze continued good during night and all morning. *Conrad* splendid, and twice did twelve knots. Lads looking out confidently for coast before sunset. Hardy having long private talks with Richardson and Lovel, both of whom have been Eastern traders, and say they know Nagasaki harbour well. Everybody getting

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pretty excited, and some saying Hardy ought to speak. I with great weight of fear at my heart, which I can't get rid of.

"July 5th, six p.m.—Good for Hardy! I believe it will work!—though as wild a thing, I suppose, as ever entered into the brain of a man! This day at five, Council. Resolved: that in the event ——"

[Here Murray's diary abruptly ends, and is not resumed till some weeks later. But the account which follows is also due to Murray, though given in a different form.]

Some little time after one bell in the second dog-watch on the 5th July, the *Conrad's* crew sighted the blue coast of Kiûsiu, they at that time being in a very high-wrought state, on account of the announcements made to them by Hardy in the "Council" at five, of which Murray speaks. It may be said, by the way, that Murray (a homely, well-meaning man, far more cautious than enterprising by temperament) fails to give in his diary anything like a fair idea of the enthusiasm with which John Hardy by this time seems to have inspired this crew. As a matter of fact, they now followed him blindly, adoring his audacity, believing in his success, entranced by his personality. Hardy was for them a dazzling angel sent to lead them to vague glories and to indefinite conquests, the precise nature of which did not, for the present, trouble their sailor-brains. When he unfolded his plans at the "Council" on the 5th, they discussed nothing, but hailed with rapture his proposals, eager to use their magnificent training for him, to do and die for him. Even Murray was infected. And at eight o'clock they lay-to behind a small island outside Nagasaki harbour, and waited there.

The moon arose. And everybody looked at her. For in all the creation there was nothing half so interesting to this crew this night as the earth's satellite.

She was at her full, and gravid with light. Up she climbed from the East in peerless, cloudy majesty. At midnight she was nearly overhead, and had then wheeled about her a light, fleecy cloud, prismic with rainbow hues, like Miss Löie Fuller in her serpentine dance. The night was full of shining, and shining was on the calm water.

The crew of the *Conrad* looked at her and swore. John Hardy, sitting among the main-sheet-ropes behind the wheel, looked questioningly at her, and muttered. But the moon did not hear.

It was better to be out at sea among the brisk breezes and the spray. At one o'clock, Hardy gave the order to let go the sheet of the main-jib, and put the helm to lee. The *Conrad* swung round, and went snorting once more to Mother Carey and the central sea.

At ten on the following night she was back at the same spot behind the island, and there she lay-to again. And the sailors watched the moon arise, and saw her climb to her noon, gravid with light, and saw her wheel about her a light cloud, *à la* Löie Fuller. And they swore more than ever.

But this time there was no turning back. It was now or never. Their stores were at an end.

John Hardy said to two men leaning over the bulwarks near him:

"Well, by moonlight, then, lads. It may not turn out to be so bad as we think."

And at about two o'clock in the morning, six boats put off from the *Conrad* and rowed away. Two contained nineteen men each, one twenty, one twenty-two, one twenty-three, and one thirty-three. On board the *Conrad* eight men were left.

At this hour the moon was westering far down the steep slope of her setting course, and all the smooth sea was branded with trails of tremulous silver. The old and drowsing Night, heavy with vigil, was all enkindled now and aglow, instinct with the glamour of the moon-beams absorbed through many a long hour, like an old toper who has imbibed in solitary orgy all the night, and towards morning he rises gorged for bed, drunken, and sighing with surfeit. A flush of pallid gold suffused the fainting air. Yonder, like a lamp which has burnt through all the slow period of the dark, and in the small hours it smoulders red, and gives an odour in the room, so down with troubled visage went the moon. Hardly a breath sighed through the slumbering harbour, and about its dark and silent islets.

The narrow inlet of sea which forms Nagasaki port lies nearly north and south, and is about twelve *go* (three miles) in length. At its mouth, it is only a quarter of a mile broad, and though it spreads out within, it is nowhere of very great breadth. All along its length, however, on both sides, the land opens up into numerous bays of considerable capacity. On the east side the land is mostly flat, and here used to be the "foreign settlement," with a water-frontage of some 700 yards, backed by picturesque slopes on which stood the villa-residences of the rich merchants. On the west side, however, where the moon went down, rose wooded mountain and steep crag. The whole is thoroughly sheltered, and affords anchorage for the biggest ships.

The six boats, furrowing their silent, silvery way, entered the harbour-mouth at the north-west, the largest boat (which contained Hardy, Richardson, and Brassey), leading. Anyone looking at this little fleet would have said that each of the boats contained no more than two men. The rest of their crowding crew were stowed away in the bottoms, and lined the sides, lying mostly at full length, and covered with strips of tarpaulin. Under the tarpaulins, too, were lanterns. The cross-seats, except those used by the rowers, had been removed.

The course lay among a number of islets, with the navigation of which Richardson seemed quite familiar. They passed Kami-no-Shima, the site of a disused gun-battery; and they crossed a stretch of sea, all white and incrusted with moonlight, to Takabok.

From the cliffs of Takabok, two centuries before, thousands of Christians were flung by the Japanese into the sea, because they refused to trample upon the Cross. And after two centuries John Hardy came to Takabok.

Yonder, a little inland, was the burning light of the Iwoshima light-house, and further still, the less brilliant beam of the Kage-no-Shima pharos. Further still, lay Pappenberg, and then Nezumi-Shima, which, in old quiet days was so often used as a pic-nic place by the white residents of Nagasaki.

One by one the islands receded, and the file of daring boats stole nearer and nearer upon the interior of the harbour, now in shadow, now adventuring swiftly across a patch of sea gloating in the dream of moonshine. And now, behind them is the last island, and before them the open basin, and ponderous in black slumber on the basin—the great navy of Japan.

But where are the eyes of the watchmen that they cannot pierce those dark coverings, and divine that there, beneath them, is creeping nearer and nearer an insidious death, a strange retribution? The watchmen, if they see, cannot divine. The riddle of destiny is far beyond them. All droops and faints in slumber—the sea, and the old night, and the moon in her far western couch, and the divining of the watchmen.

Only the best-trained crew in the world, led by the best leader, are awake: and they have sworn an oath.

And, suddenly, a miracle of luck is revealed to them. For yonder all the western half of the harbour is seen to be lying in absolute shadow, while the eastern half is still glittering in aspen corruscations of white light. And the main part of the fleet, it is clear, is lying within that western gloom.

The boats, by signal, separate. Each knows its work—each has its instructions.

They are, in general, to aim at the stars, they are to fly at big game, they are to make for battle-ships.

But each has separate recommendations to fulfil. And to every man is given his place, and his work, according to his powers. The company is organised into captains,

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commanders, lieutenants, as in the big navy at home. Hardy has been minute.

The biggest boat of all, containing thirty-three men, cruises at zig-zag for three or four minutes; and then Hardy sees, and decides. He whispers an order; and the boat—the long-boat of some European four-master—turns directly westward, and enters the recess in the coast-wall which is directly north of the Tetegami dock. Here the water is hardly ruffled by a ripple; and here the blackness

The sword of Brassey is in his breast.

of shadow is absolute. Two points of light only are visible within that gloom—the white mast-light, and the coloured port light of a great ship.

Her massive hull is just discernible, disparting the water with its outward-bulging girth. She conveys a suggestion of such ponderousness, that it looks as though no power on earth could ever move that squat mass an inch through the water. She is the giant of the Japanese navy, the terrible *Hirosaki*, and she has a crew of 576 men.

But they are asleep, and the thirty-three are awake; and yonder to the far eastward, in the broad brand of shimmering and weltering moonshine, is a boat in which some of the harbour police are lolling on their oars, chatting, seeing nothing. And the bull's-eyes of the lighthouses glare steadily, and the watch-lights of the ships glare steadily, and they see nothing.

The oars are muffled, and the boat glides through shadow beneath the poop of the *Hirosaki*, and when a grappling iron steals upward and fixes in a beading of the stern, we may very well say that the British lion is crouching to spring.

Up wriggles Brassey by the pole and gains the cornice, and, immediately afterwards, up wriggles Hardy. And when Hardy gains the cornice, he coughs a little; and Brassey whispers in his ear a long: "Sh-h-h-h."

Yonder, six yards from them, is the officer of the watch, walking to and fro, between the mainmast and the aft nine-incher.

The two lie on their faces, and are hidden by a ridge of bulwark above the cornice. Within reach is a coil of rope, and Brassey's hand steals between an interspace of the taffrail, and with absolute noiselessness draws forth the coil, makes a bowling-knot round one rail, and lowers a rope-end to the boat.

And now the men arrive rapidly. There is plenty of room to receive them. They are like flies climbing an overhanging rampart by a spider's *fil de toile*.

Before the last man is up, three of them have run stooping forward, and the officer drops without a groan. Just then, from for'ard, a man climbs the stair to report to the officer that the three lights are duly burning: it is his half-hourly duty. And as he reaches the topmast rung, the sword of Brassey is in his breast, and he drops.

The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is a village, five hundred feet long, but an almost deserted village. Just for'ard of the foremost funnel, two men are talking, one leaning against the foremast, one with his hand resting on a boat-davit; and a moment before the sword pierces him, the latter gives a light laugh at a jest of the other; and the other utters a feeble cry, and dies. The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is an English village.

They descend to the main-deck, to the fo'castles, to the cabins, to the engine-rooms, down even to the turtle-back armour-deck at the water-line, and everywhere, with the silence and the thoroughness of the Angel of the Passover, they smite, they slay. As a man cries out, he dies; he opens his eyes, and they are sightless. The ship flows with blood.

At a door for'ard, Hardy lifts a lantern and looks into a small apartment in which sleep ten men. He shuts the door upon them, secures it, and does not kill. They are the remnant,—the only men left alive,—and he will have need of them.

In the bunkers of the *Hirosaki* are 2,500 tons of coal. The Englishmen are soon crowding in the engine-room.

Five other ships, besides the *Hirosaki*, are already in their hands. But their work is not over. Massacre for massacre—John Hardy's for Yen How's! Each has his Sabbath, and his Passover-night.

Once more the six boats put off from the six captured ships, each containing from five to nine men, all carefully picked and mixed, according to their special knowledge of ship-work; and these, six meet at an agreed spot just opposite the patent slip of the Dock-company. Then three of the boats' crews abandon their boats, stepping over into the other three boats, and these three row away, each containing sixteen men.

And each of them glides beneath the stern of a Japanese war-ship, and the men climb, and kill, and hurry to the engine-rooms.

Down in smoky disaster and eclipse sets the red moon, and the deep dark which precedes the morning covers the silent tragedy.

Three pistol-shots altogether, two in one ship, one in another, have been fired by the Japanese. These shots represent all the struggle which has taken place.

But the darkness which has supervened, almost as suddenly as the flickering-out of an out-worn lamp, cannot prevent the watches on other ships from perceiving that some of the fleet are pouring out an unaccountable smoke from their funnels. They must be lost in amazement, unless they conclude that the ships have received secret orders from the Admiral to sail. But they look on, and do nothing but look—for the Admiral is with the fleet, borne in the *Hirosaki*, and all, they think, is under his eyes.

There is a rattle of chains, and the steam-windlasses are a-clank, and as the first faint hint of day tinges the East, the solid-looking bulk of the *Hirosaki*—moves. And one after another the nine bulks move, wending northwards in file.

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Nine—they are few in number, but they represent a good quarter of Japan's weight in war-ships. And with that quarter, Hardy would then and there attack the other three-quarters, with an inward certainty of beating them, were it not that he lacks one thing—men. The crew of a six-inch quick-firer is five; and five men represent the third part of a complete ship's-crew in this sparsely-manned fleet.

But the sound of cannon is good to the ear of Hardy, and in mere self-indulgence, as the *Hirosaki* steams past the island of Takabok, he sends a 9·2 inch wire-gun shell among the still slumbering fleet. And the startled hills of Nagasaki awake, and cry aloud with many a voice of surprise, and the shell bursts in the engine-room of a cruiser.

The shot is not answered. There is an amazement so profound as to resemble coma. While it lasts action is impossible.

But the amazement of the Japanese navy at being shot at by their own Admiral-ship was, if possible, surpassed by the crews of the three new Chinese cruisers, the *Hi-ti*, *Hi-tien*, and *Hai-wan*, when, three days later, at noon, a fleet of nine Japanese ships proceeded without warning to sink them as they lay at anchor at Shanghai. They made no resistence to this sudden and overwhelming assault; they simply sank.

In each of the nine ships were a few Japanese who, by Hardy's orders, had been spared to do forced labour in working the ships. Being unarmed, they behaved well, and from them was learnt the probable station of the three Chinese cruisers.

The "Hundred and Eighty" (so called) then proceeded southward, and touched at Hong-Kong, intending to take on board all the white men they could find there. But there were no longer any white men at Hong Kong, though there was coal.

Then they turned their bows toward the West, among them being the *Conrad*, with her crew of eight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Frown of England.

By the end of July, one thing at least had been clearly hinted to the whole of Europe: that if those British could not write music, they could work; if they could not make pretty things, they could certainly fight; if they were not "*élégants*," they at least possessed the knack, and the secret, and the sword of the Conqueror.

"*La morgue britannique!*" "*La raideur britannique!*"—it was not, then, after all, a mere insolence of semi-savages, but a pride based on a genuine superiority of national value and valour.

The Continental nations were not quick in learning this fact: a lingering unbelief persisted in them; and in learning it, they perished; and in teaching it to them, Britain herself all but perished.

The numerous campaigns all over the Continent had now occupied not quite five months; and at the end of this time Europe was in a state of collapse and exhaustion far exceeding that which existed at the close of the Thirty Years War.

About a league to the south-west of Liege, in a pine-wood, there stands a small, old-fashioned inn with over-hanging gables, whose frontage looks directly upon the brown waters of the Meuse. Here the Emperor Wilhelm, Duke Paul, representing the Romanoffs, and M. Hanotaux met by appointment.

The first was chiefly a soldier, the second chiefly a diplomat, the third chiefly a man of business.

They sat in one of those vast bedrooms of old Belgian inns, on the first floor, grouped near a window which overlooked the river.

The deliberation was conducted, as usual, in French.

"The situation," said M. Hanotaux "has developed. And developments generally demand new plans. The facts we know: by means of a single *contretemps* to our fleet, France finds herself with two invading armies in her territories, Germany with three, and Russia with three. And in no case has any one of these eight armies been unsuccessful."

"The defensive," said the Emperor, "has always been intensely repugnant to the genius of the German army. It is an army of conquest and aggression. The smallness of its victories in this war has been due to the fact that it fought on German soil."

Duke Paul and M. Hanotaux smiled at each other with their eyes.

"But the question is one of means, rather than of causes," said M. Hanotaux. "Let us face this fact boldly: that our great enemy is aided by the geography of the earth. We should have beaten England—we none of us doubted that we should. But we have not. To me there seems to have been two chief reasons for this failure, which may now be more or less removed: Firstly, the diversions caused by the hostilities entered upon against us by other nations; and secondly, the sea."

"But both reasons remain?" said Duke Paul interrogatively.

"The sea does," broke in Wilhelm, "but, candidly, it is my opinion that France should long ago have made peace with Italy, and Russia with Austria."

"Your Majesty is perhaps a little sanguine in this view," answered M. Hanotaux, "for Italy was the aggressor, and perhaps one might say the same of Austria. On the other hand, Germany seems to have no real cause for a bloody war with Sweden and Denmark."

"But was not Sweden, then, the aggressor, monsieur, as far as Germany was concerned?" asked Wilhelm. "Did she not wantonly attack my coasts for no other valid reason than that Germany was the ally of Russia? And since Denmark has joined Sweden in this unprovoked attack, what would you have? This, be sure, is not a matter for the peace-maker, monsieur, but for the unsparing and implacable sword."

"Still," said M. Hanotaux, and he stroked his straggling *barbiche de bourgeois*, "our conference, conducted in a spirit of unyielding insistence upon rights, will hardly result in good fruit. The fact is that we each of us have to fight one great, and at least one smaller foe. I have inaugurated this meeting for the purpose of asking in the most definite terms this question: Since the resources of Europe are visibly nearing their end, do we prefer to conquer the great foe or the small? Is it wisdom to persist in both attempts?"

"I agree with you in principle," said Wilhelm.

"The principle is obvious," said Duke Paul.

"And to me the details also seem obvious," said M. Hanotaux quietly. "England triumphant over Europe means, of course, the wiping out of the empires of the world—it means a Saxon earth. When I say 'a Saxon earth,' I shudder, Your Majesty—I shudder, M. le Duc Paul,—and you shudder, too. The thought, you will say, is not pretty. And the nations will not permit that? Let us make peace with our brothers, that we may crush the stranger!"

"A League of Europe?" said the Duke.

"A League of Europe," answered M. Hanotaux, and bowed.

Wilhelm flushed with enthusiasm, and he said:

"I agree!—in principle."

"The principle is obvious," put in the Duke.

"And the details, I think!" cried M. Hanotaux.

"Who will make a beginning?"

"If we say—Germany."

"Not Germany!" said the Kaiser.

"Then Russia," said M. Hanotaux.

"Hardly Russia, perhaps," mused Duke Paul. "The heart of the Tsar is set upon the crushing of Sweden, at least——"

"Then France!" exclaimed M. Hanotaux, "since you leave to France this glory."

"You mean that you will accept the conditions demanded by Italy, monsieur?"

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"Yes, Your Majesty!"

"At once?"

"No—not precisely—but soon."

"When?"

"After the next great battle."

"Whatever the result?"

"Yes, M. le Duc Paul."

"But after the next great battle the southern resources of France will, as I understand it, be at an end," said Wilhelm bluntly. "You will be compelled to do what you offer to do."

"Not 'compelled,' perhaps, Your Majesty; for the territorial resources of Italy will be practically at an end also. There remains, however, her—Navy. We have need of it."

As the inwardness of M. Hanotaux's scheme unfolded with these words, it won the whole interest of his two interlocutors. In both the royal and the ducal brains ripened at the same instant this thought: "A Second Invasion of England."

"I follow you with the closest attention, monsieur," said Wilhelm.

"And I also find your reflections of the profoundest interest, monsieur," added the Duke.

"France," proceeded M. Hanotaux, "will adopt this line of conduct under the following conditions: first, she will satisfy the claims of Italy on the understanding, between her and Italy, that Italy becomes the ally of the Allies; and secondly, France demands that the two Allies follow her example, by generally granting the demands of Sweden, Denmark, and Austria, on the understanding that they also become the allies of the Allies against the common foe of Europe."

Wilhelm leapt up.

"The thing is done, monsieur!" he exclaimed.

"It is a question of *when*," said Duke Paul.

"Precisely," said the Kaiser, "it becomes a question of when."

"*When* the next great battle between France and Italy has been fought," answered M. Hanotaux.

"No!" leapt from the mouth of Wilhelm, in a sort of half-suppressed start, and then there was a long pause. The fact was that each desired to fight yet one battle with the enemy with whom it was proposed to make terms, in the hope and belief that the victory would be his, and the terms of peace therefore more advantageous for him.

Duke Paul spoke meditatively; and he said:

"I agree, on the condition that Russia will make no terms with Sweden and Austria until after the next considerable battle with each of these, whether the battle of France with Italy has then occurred or not."

"And the conditions of Germany are identical," said the Kaiser.

"Then there is nothing for it but to shake hands on the compact, Your Majesty, and M. le Duc Paul. It may be observed, however, that your condition, and mine, insures a certain and very considerable reduction of the not large territorial forces now at our disposal. Is there no departure possible from this determination?"

There was no departure. The three men spoke on for about an hour; and as the darkness gathered, they rode away toward Liege, and took train in different directions.

The agreement, often repeated, was this: five battles, one by France, two by Germany, two by Russia; then, if possible, a European peace and League.

Russia would be prepared to hand over to Austria the doubtful legacy of the still warring Balkan States, and all that stretch of fair land from the Golden Horn to Cape Matapan: and she would yield Finland, with an indemnity, to the victorious arms of Sweden; Germany would buy off Sweden and Denmark; France would yield to Italy the Haute Savoy, Avoie, the Alpes Hautes, Basses, and Maritimes, and Var.

For all this large generosity there was a cause, bitterly near home, awfully pressing. The one thing now that could save Europe from England was the necessity imposed upon England to recall her armies to defend her own territory.

For, at last, 100,000 British soldiers occupied all the Seine valley between St. Germain and Argenteuil, and, the headquarters of Lord Roberts and his staff was the Taverne St. Roch near the great *escalier* of St. Germain. A hundred thousand men—a small army when the war began; an immense war-host now. There was no intention of attacking Paris, which required an investing circuit of 125 miles;—but Paris was not France. Normandy already was once more British; the rest of France lay open; and Italy had crossed the Iser.

Germany's plight was hardly less extreme. Her splendid legions had thrown themselves northward in three continuous streams to meet three branches of the same Teutonic race of which she was part. To the west, occupying Schleswig-Holstein and the upper reaches of the Elbe as far as Domitz, Denmark lay encamped; to the east, Sweden had drawn lines of circumvallation by a ring of earthwork forts and Schumann gun-turrets round Breslau, having captured the Breslau-Posen railway; and midway between these two was that brazen-browed, nimble, ever-intruding enemy, who alone had made possible to the others their victories.

Northern Germany, from Hamburg to Tilsit, had been the scene of the worst series of massacres—carnage after carnage—ever witnessed in history; Royal Saxon Corps, famed in military history, Bismarck Cuirassiers, gallant Silesian and West Prussian Corps—paragons of the soldier's hope of attainment—all had been flung, and flung in vain, into the devouring maw of war; still the British came, though in ever-lessening numbers; and still from further and further south marched the precious levies of the Fatherland. Seven of the twenty corps of the Imperial host remained; and of these, two Bavarian brigades were marching upon Naumberg, whence a nondescript army of Socialists, Nihilists, and malcontents had issued from its headquarters a manifesto to the nation, announcing the day of Liberty, and inviting support.

As for Russia, she turned a four-fold face south, south-west, north-west, and inward, and everywhere saw doom. The Army of India, having waited in vain for invasion, crossed the Helmund, annihilated at Merv the still unrecalled remnants of the Russian army of Turkestan, and had now, after a great victory at Novo Tcherkask, reached Kharkov by road, with the Kremlin for its *objectif*. Odessa, Sebastopol, and the Black Sea littoral were British.

One of the divisions of the Austrian army had in a single day disappeared; but another quickly sprang in its place; and this, with its sister army, adopted Moltke's principle of marching separately and fighting together, had, after a strenuous campaign, only surpassed for carnage by the great drama of blood transacting itself in Northern Germany, made Poland an Austrian province, and crossed the sources of the Niemen. Russia was doing doubtful battle in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Asia Minor. The battleships of Sweden were at the mouth of the Neva; and in the heart of Russia itself a deep subterranean muttering, like a presage of universal earthquake and overthrow, was suggested by the mere word "Nihilist."

This, in briefest outline, was the situation on the Continent at the moment of the conference in the wood at Liege. The three nations which had primarily been made the tools of Yen How, regretted now their rashness. They had miscalculated the Lion.

But, suddenly—as if it needed only the conference in the wood to bring them luck—their sky cleared. In the darkest hour of their extremity, they found a Hope, their last.

On two days following, about two weeks after the meeting in the wood, two considerable victories attended the arms of the Allies.

One of these was French: the 14th (or Lyons) Army Corps of 40,000 men met the advancing Italian Army be-

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Won by a flanking movement of Don Cossacks.

tween Burgoin and the left bank of the Rhone, and though outnumbered by ten thousand, gave to Italy an emphatic, and indeed final negative to her long-fought attempt at conquest. And at once the Aurillas brigade of the 13th (Clermont-Ferrand) corps, which was all that was left of it, was ordered southward to cross the Alps and carry the threat of war into the enemy's country, prior to the proposition to Italy of the terms agreed upon between the Allies.

The second victory was Russian, and was gained in a far more momentous conflict over the magnificent British Indian troops, which had gallantly won their way from Quetta almost to the walls of Moscow. On this battle General Dragomiroff, in a great, final bid for victory, had concentrated almost the whole of the remaining forces of his master. It was a mixed combat in which Ural, Orenburg and Transcaspian Cossacks fought with Bengal Lancers, and Turkestan Infantry Brigades with Royal Fusiliers. The battle, from the commencement of which the 90,000 British were greatly outnumbered, was, after five hours' massacre, won by a flanking movement of Don Cossacks. The number of the slain was 160,000.

Great as was the exhaustion in which this dear victory left Russia, the immediate result was a sudden and enormous increase of her prestige. And two things at once happened: first, Sweden, no longer acting in concert with the great arm of England, which was the incentive to her audacity, became anxious to secure by peace her conquests in Northern Russia; and secondly, the Kaiser, knowing that terms would now be offered to Sweden by Russia, became anxious to make terms with Sweden before her hands were freed to direct upon Germany the entire remnant of her forces. In this way it happened that nearly every one of the contending nations were, owing to the results of these two battles, strongly motived toward peace. Nor could Austria resist the pressure of her allies, Italy and Germany, nor the large amenities of Russia south of the Balkans; and in the many-sided treaty signed at Vienna on the 23rd of August, Denmark, too, compelled by the pressure of events, was one of the signatories.

It was now that the long-expected had come at last. Led by the rigour of events, and by the general tendency of long-maturing sentiment, an exhausted Europe had inaugurated a League—as the first preliminary to a renewal of her life—having for its object the destruction of an exhausted Britain.

For Britain, too, was exhausted; and already had lost semblance to that land of free-handed opulence which her sons remembered with sighs. John Bull's girth had thinned.

Yet if photographs at this hour could have been taken of all her people, and the traits of these agglomerated into the expression of a single face, that face would have been the wild and wan and gaunt visage of a Man, on whose brow brooded a fatal frown of indignation and resolve, not to be softened but by death.

The idea of Europe was to hurl itself in its whole banded strength upon this diminished force. And it would be strange if, this time, the island could withstand the continent.

England's navy had, on the whole, done well. Up to the moment of the new League, she still might be said to command the seas. But with the League, even without the practically intact navy of Italy, her supremacy was gone. *With* the navy of Italy, it was twice and thrice obliterated.

The new Allies, indeed, looked forward with certainty to another great naval battle before they could effect their design; but their ultimate passage to England was practically assured.

And Sweden, flushed with victory, contributed an Army Corps; and Russia, freed from invaders, contributed two; and Germany one; and France one; and Austria three; and Denmark two brigades; and Italy two brigades.

The port of debarkation was fixed at Antwerp, whose neutrality thus suffered willing violation, and in the last days of August 360,000 troops, troop-ships, and war-ships were hasting over sea and land to *rendez-vous* upon Antwerp.

England, warned both from the Continent and America, was not in the dark. On the 5th of September, when the great Armada set sail from the Belgian port, her whole available force in ships of war was massed in Portsmouth Harbour, all but ready to sail.

It was on this very day, toward two in the afternoon, that a singular species of duel was taking place between two men at Worthing. It was war *in extremis*, as bitter as, and more breathless in its mad intensity than the great war going forward around them.

One of these men was called Richardson, and the other Atkins. Atkins was excise, with a salary of thirty shillings; Richardson was municipal, and acquainted with rates. His *locale* was the Town Hall, and he earned forty shillings. Both were fairly active young men of twenty-five.

Apart from their steady and respectable employments, each had a species of less reputable avocation, which, however, he pursued with extreme zeal, and, for some reason or other, was proud of. Richardson said that he was "on the staff" of the *Evening News*; and Atkins that he was "on the staff" of the *Sun*.

This only meant that they had agreed to send any local news that might be of interest to those papers.

Now, on this 5th of August, a bit of local news of considerable interest did, in fact, occur. For a strange-looking little craft, which was nothing else than a Maltese *speronare*, had arrived at the pier; and from her had landed a man of uncertain age, who slowly walked up the pier with his eyes on the ground, made his way to Dixon's Commercial Hotel

half-way up the Pier Street, and there disappeared. The rest of the *speronare's* occupants had at once put out to sea again. But it was quite an hour afterwards before either Atkins or Richardson, being employed on their Jekyll affairs, got the least scent of this Hyde matter.

It was Atkins who, at the dinner-hour, first entered Dixon's commercial-room. In the front of Dixon's was announced a "Daily———Ordinary," the two words being separated by a great gap where the word "Shilling," now painted out, had once stood.

As Atkins entered the room, he saw the back of the stranger, who was leaving it by a door which led to the bedrooms above, and he started.

The whole interest of his life was instantly centred upon this man; there was something in his appearance, his dress, which aroused the instinct of the reporter. About the man was the odour of the sea.

At this time, a bit of news was to the people of Britain like rain to the desert. Men often spent their very last half-penny in buying a paper, which they knew could tell them little more than they already knew.

We have said that Atkins was interested at sight of the stranger; but this interest became a passion the moment that, approaching a spread side-table, he saw beside a soiled plate a piece of paper; and on the paper a certain name written at the bottom of a promise-to-pay, together with a London address.

It had happened that the stranger had, to begin with, informed Dixon that he was without a copper in his pockets; and Dixon, after some demur, on the security of a gold ring, an honest face, and a written promise-to-pay, had not only trusted the stranger with a meal and a bed, but had lent him twelve shillings to pay his fare to London that night. The promise-to-pay, he had in a moment of bustle left on the table, and Atkins saw it, and turned to run.

And as he turned to run, lo! Richardson was at the door. And Atkins let his flat hand fall upon the paper, and stood leaning with careless grace.

Richardson, on his way to Dixon's, had heard of the arrival of the stranger, and there was a breath of haste at his lips. He said:

"Hullo! Anything up?"

"Not as I know of. You heard anything?"

"No. Seen the article in to-day's *D.T.*——?"

"No. Why are you so late to-day? I have had dinner ten minutes——"

"What, are you off? It's only——"

"I've got to be. Beastly job on hand——gauging business for Hatley's. See you to-night at the club——"

Atkin's diplomacy was bad, for his walk toward the door, for one thing, was too rapid to be natural; and Richardson had noted his statuesque pose, his rather pale face, and his unmoving hand over the paper. So he had no sooner passed through the door, than Richardson, too, had read; and at once he, too, rushed to the door. But it was locked on the outside.

The thought of summoning slow Mr. Dixon by the bell never even entered his head; he simply flew to the window, dashed up the sash, dropped into the area, and climbed up to the rails on the opposite side by the help of a swinging coal-cellar door.

Yonder, half way down the street, was Atkins, running with all his legs. Richardson, as though life lay before, and death behind, was after him.

Atkins, however, was considerably taller and fleeter, Richardson being inclined to be fat; and the race was clearly the foremost man's, when, suddenly, there appeared from a bye-street, with callous saunter, a policeman about ten yards ahead of Atkins.

And at once Richardson sent forth the impassioned shout of "Stop thief! Stop thief!" many times repeated.

And an instant later Atkins was firmly gripped in the arms of the officer.

"Let me go, Jones, you infernal idiot!" screamed Atkins, "you ought to know better, you *fool!* Can't you guess—Jones—you silly ass——"

But Jones, with zealous sense of duty, maintained his grip on the frantic man, till he saw the accuser mysteriously rush onward past the accused. And he tossed his head with a smile, as he relaxed his hold of Atkins; and he said:

"Oh, well, I suppose it's only one of their little newspaper squabbles——"

Atkins was firmly gripped in the arms of the officer.

So Richardson only reached the telegraph-office about ten seconds before Atkins; and the telegraph-man was engaged to Atkin's sister.

And therefore the *Sun* got its message some five minutes before the *News*; but by some sleight-of-hand, or extra energy, the *News* was not out-done. It reached Piccadilly Circus first, though the *Sun* was first at Holborn; and it was never quite determined to which of the two Finsbury and Tooting owed their gratitude for the news.

On the placards of each the words were the same:

JOHN HARDY
ARRIVED
IN ENGLAND.

(To be continued.)

THE WORLD OF DRESS.

Edited by Mrs. ARIA.

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The World of Dress will contain the Latest Fashion News in Paris, Vienna, New York, and London. Theatrical Dress in these cities will be largely dealt with, for it is on the stage that the changes of Fashion are first noted. A special feature each month will be an Interview with a Leading Costumier in one of those cities, who will specially design for *The World of Dress* one of the Coloured Plates which will be presented with each copy every month.

READY ON THE 1st OF EVERY MONTH.

BROUGHT HOME.

"Hallo, old man! Can't accept the invitation? Oh, pshaw, you'll regret it! Any number of swell people and pretty girls are to be there, and all the fellows. By the way, have you met the new girl? Country niece of Mrs. Witherbee, I believe. The fellows are raving about her."

"Is she to be at the houseparty, Upton?"

"Should say so! Couldn't get along without her! Good-bye old fellow; must be off. I'm running to the sea-side for the week end. Better change your mind about that invitation."

"Thank you, Upton. I may. Remember me to everyone."

"H'm! Upton's a queer fellow; good-hearted, though. I rather think I shall take his advice. A few days off can do me no harm. Almost five years have passed since I took my last holiday."

"Well, well, Hampton, glad to see you took my advice!" was the greeting he received from Upton. "Girls all inquiring for you. Come and join us."

"Ah, Mrs. Witherbee!"

"Why, Mr. Hampton! I am so glad you have come. We were almost afraid to count upon you."

"Mr. Hampton,—Katherine, my neice, Miss Heyward, —Mr. Hampton."

"I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Heyward."

It was rather a conventional speech, but there was a depth of sincerity in his low voice which gave it a real charm. He wondered where he had seen this beautiful niece of Mrs. Witherbee. Her eyes, her mouth, her regular features, even the graceful outlines of her head and shoulders, seemed familiar.

The rest of the company demanded his attention, and he had to leave Heyward's circle.

The conversation was not very general at dinner that evening. Hampton had taken Miss Heyward to the table, and he was very willing to have his attention absorbed by her. As he gazed at her perfect complexion and clear-cut profile he thought he had never before been so forcibly struck with a woman's beauty; "and yet," he added to himself, "I feel that I have seen her somewhere before."

"Do you enjoy boating, Miss Heyward?" A bright idea came to Hampton.

"I am passionately fond of it, Mr. Hampton. Indeed, it is almost my only pastime at home."

"Then let us arrange a boating party for this evening. Mrs. Fitzsimmons proposed it. There are four small boats available. Whom shall we ask?"

"Let me think—Mr. Upton (Hampton bit his lip) and Miss Cruttendon (it was all right, after all, he thought; she had planned for Upton to take Miss Cruttendon). Mr. James and Miss Carhart, Mr. Harrington and Miss Wycliffe—that will fill the boats will it not, Mr. Hampton?"

She looked up brightly, and counted them off on her dainty fingers.

"Capital! I shall speak to the men immediately after dinner, and tell them whom they are to ask to accompany them. You will favour me, will you not, Miss Heyward?"

"I thank you, Mr. Hampton,"—she glanced charmingly up at him—"but Mr. Upton has already asked me to go with him. Of course, you will take Miss Cruttendon?"

Hampton tried hard to hide his chagrin.

"I am very sorry that Mr. Upton is to be the fortunate one. Yes, I shall be pleased to take Miss Cruttendon, if she has no previous engagement."

As the boats in single file silently rounded the outer point the sound of music floated across the water. Musicians were playing a serenade—an Italian love song, with soft, insinuating cadence. The oars ceased to move and the boats drifted aimlessly on into the shadows.

"Heavenly, Miss Cruttendon, is it not?" Hampton asked, as the music ceased. But his eyes were fixed upon the boat occupied by Miss Heyward and Upton.

"I say, there's a jolly place a little way up, called Satan's ladder, I believe. Let's row up."

They glided up past meadow and woodland. As they rounded a sharp point there came into view a perpendicular wall of rock, towering majestically above the water. Miniature trees shot out from the crevices and tangled vines hung from it in beautiful festoons. Winding up through a natural ravine, rude steps led to the summit.

The boats were secured at the foot of the cliff.

"Let's go up, Miss Heyward."

"Thank you, but I would rather not undertake it."

"Oh, I would love to go, Mr. Upton!" Miss Cruttendon said quickly.

Upton ascended extending a helping hand to Miss Cruttendon. The others followed. Hampton was left alone with Miss Heyward.

"I should love to have undertaken that climb five years ago."

"Do five years, then, make so much difference in a girl's life?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Hampton, or in a man's either. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, sometimes—but it has not made much difference in mine. Five years ago I took my last vacation, and I find myself just as capable of enjoyment now as then."

"And just as ready to fall in love!"

He was taken aback.

"I do not quite understand, Miss Heyward."

There was just a trace of haughtiness in his tone.

"Why, you know, all men are ready to fall in love—and to fall out again."

"Hardly all men, Miss Heyward." his voice was reproachful. "Do you think it altogether fair to make so sweeping an assertion?"

"No, it is not; but have you never been guilty of that, Mr. Hampton?"

"No, Miss Heyward; decidedly no! that very quality I have always regarded in man's character as one of his lowest, meanest traits. For me to love once would be to love always."

"Would be, Mr. Hampton?" she looked shyly up at him.

She leant back wearily against the massive wall of rock, and in contrast to it she seemed so frail, that he longed to protect her, to shield her from the men who had made her doubt.

"Mr. Hampton, some years ago one of my girl friends met a man who swore that he would always be true to

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her. She was but a girl, and blindly trusted him. He was an artist taking a holiday in her village, and acquaintance ripened into something deeper. When the summer was over and he was forced to leave, he kissed her and swore with his lips to hers he would return; and she waited for him with a blind trust.

"Imagine her feelings when, some time ago, she, grown to a woman, met him; and he, not knowing her, showered attention upon her, even attempted to make love to her."

Hampton leant back against the cliff, and, with his oar, traced figures in the sand.

"Do you marvel that she began to distrust men?"

He did not speak and all round them was silence, unbroken save by the muffled laughter of the climbers.

Suddenly he straightened up. He took her hand in his. His arm stole round her waist.

"She shall believe in them hereafter, Kate."

She drew her young form up to its full height and stepped out from the rock. Her resolute head was silhouetted against the silver moon.

"Stop! five years make a great difference in a girl's life, Mr. Hampton."

His hands dropped to his side.

"And in a man's," he muttered.

The others were descending.

"I say, you missed a jolly climb. Glorious view from above. Can't see why they call it Satan's ladder though. Ought to be the golden stairs."

H. T. C.

AN AUCTION EXPERIENCE.

It is one of those drowsy autumn days when the atmosphere seems charged with the hum of busy insect life. I am sole occupant of the principal room of a village inn. Mingling with the universal hum without comes the sound of a monotonous human voice through the open window. It is too far away for me to be able to distinguish it clearly.

The landlord fortunately enters at this moment, and I forthwith seize the opportunity of satisfying my lazy curiosity concerning the distant voice, which has never ceased to murmur monotonously since I entered. The explanation is unexciting. It is only an auctioneer on a neighbouring green—a travelling auctioneer, the landlord informs me, who accomodates any number of persons in the matter of selling.

I stroll leisurely out of the inn, light a cigar, and take the direction whence comes the buzz of voices. Behind a dilapidated house surrounded by a dilapidated wall, I come upon a motley group. I look on in silent amusement now at the auctioneer, who glibly extols the quality of each article in turn, with a fluency and air of conviction quite astonishing, considering that any knowledge of what he offers for sale has probably been derived within the last few hours.

I have stood thus for a good while; it is beginning to grow somewhat slow, and I soon tire of the salesman's monotonous voice, for ever ascending the scale: "12s., 12-6, going at 13—gone!" And so it repeats itself, varied by nods and gesticulations on the part of the audience, and ever culminating in the significant monosyllable.

Just at this state of the proceedings my eye falls on the figure of a girl in my vicinity. I am leaning over a low wall; she is close to me on the other side; her very nearness has caused me to overlook her. She is a lady, evidently, judging from her dress. Her face I cannot see well; it is covered with a long veil edged deeply with crape, so that her features are, to a great extent, hidden from me. She is clad as a widow in deepest mourning attire, with only her hair as a bright redeeming spot from the general sombreness.

When I first observed her, she is leaning wearily against the wall. I feel stirred to compassion. She looks so lonely, so sad. Can I help her, I ask myself? Is there no chance of getting into conversation? I beat about mentally to discover any means by which to meet my end. A glass of water might, and almost certainly would, be considered an officious and unwarranted offer.

I dismissed the idea. But a chair, as a substitute for the comfortless support of the wall—that could surely not be objected to! I hastened away full of new ideas, but find the matter more easily contemplated than achieved. In breathless haste, I finally pounce upon one. It is but a ricketty kitchen one, but what matters it? With it I hurry back elated. Fearful of rebuff, I present my spoil somewhat diffidently to the mysterious stranger. She only looks up surprised, bows, and graciously accepts. I am fascinated—enthralled.

"You—you!" I stammer, inelegantly (it is strange, I never can command fluency when most desirable). "Is there any article you would like me to bid for, for you?"

"Oh, no," she says very softly. "I am seller, not buyer; see, my things are going up."

She speaks so low I have to stoop to catch the words. I suppose it is the effect of some recently sustained grief; I have heard of sorrow subduing people like this.

"You cannot mean it?" I exclaim, astounded at the information. "Well, luckily, I am a buyer."

I feel I have proved equal to the occasion here; other matters must be in keeping. The first article exposed for sale is a small timepiece, a perfect little gem in its way.

"My poor husband's," murmurs my companion, whereupon I procure the article in question, not without a jealous pang at the thought of the former proprietor. I became reckless of consequences, as one after another the articles are knocked down to me, and reckless of the suspicious and curious glances directed towards me. My companion remonstrates with me scarcely above her breath. And soon all the fair stranger's property has been disposed of, and I am the happy possessor.

"Should you," said I, a happy thought striking me as I ruefully ask myself what I am to do with it all, "should you," treading carefully and delicately, "care to select any of these things to take with you? I shall only be too happy, you know."

"Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, with somewhat of pain in her voice, and yet with a gentle decision; and so I desist.

The sale is over now. As I am turning away it

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occurs to me that, being here, at any rate I may as well dispatch business matters.

"It makes things so much easier," the salesman remarks confidentially, "your having bought up the lot, sir. The party in black," indicating the stranger by a movement of his thumb in her direction and a solemn shake of his head, "requested it quite specially that, as she goes up to London by next train and then abroad, she might receive payment for her articles directly after the sale."

I leave him. Shortly afterwards he moves in the direction of the stranger, and I delay purposely that they may have the opportunity of arranging money matters, and then join her. It is nearly time for the London train, and mine, too, will be due directly. Upon the strength of this, I venture to escort my companion to the station. She is evidently very tired and is silent on the way. She has kept her veil persistently down throughout the close sultry day; to my infinite disgust I see no prospect of its being raised now. As we reach the station I procure a first class ticket and secure an empty carriage. She is really looking very faint; so at the last moment I thrust in my sherry flask in case it may prove of use.

"You are very kind," she falters in a low voice.

Just as I am about to disclaim the charge the train begins to move, and I stand off, raising my hat in farewell. The next moment the mysterious stranger is gone, and with her name yet undiscovered.

The things!—by the way, I had almost forgotten my extensive purchases. The thought is damping, still I have done a philanthropic deed. I have arranged for them to arrive at Bayham next day, thence at the Grange, by porter, to provoke as little notice as possible. So I seek to dismiss them from my thoughts.

* * * * *

The Grange breakfast room is a pleasant change after City chambers; at least, so I find it the morning after my arrival. My father, mother and I make up the breakfast party. My father is enjoying his newspaper and coffee, alternately, and is consequently silent.

"I'm blessed!" exclaims my father, suddenly startling us. "If I ever heard of such a clever trick! Ha, ha!" with a loud laugh, "very good indeed—capital!"

My mother raises her meek eyes in mild curiosity.

"You've heard of Ramforth, of course," pursues my father, "the notorious London thief? Well," he continued, "Lady Broadford's house has been broken into during her absence, and articles abstracted to the value of a pretty round sum. How do you think the audacious rascal has disposed of them—in London? Oh, no, he was too well looked after there; but there happened to be a travelling auctioneer at Fairly, who, all unsuspecting, served his turn admirably. Such things as plate, of course, he reserved; that would have been dangerous, but valuable articles of various sorts were all easily disposed of here.

"But that is not the point yet," as an expression of surprise escaped my mother, "that is not all the audacity of the fellow! He was there himself, got up as an interesting young widow, attracted a wealthy lord, or baronet, or something of the kind, who happened to be there, got him over quite head and ears with her charms, got him to buy up the stock, intact, in the heat of his juvenile passion! Didn't stop there, but was escorted by the young idiot to the station at the close of the proceedings, and seen off to London. Oh, the precious young idiot!" exclaims my father, with a laugh that seems to me almost diabolical. "I've not heard of anything so good for a long time. The infatuated ass!" and here follow a chuckle.

I am unable to describe my frame of mind at the close of my father's graphic recital. Of course I did not occur to him in connection with the story. I am a true Englishman. I abhor the idea of the impending ridicule I shall have to undergo. Can nothing be done to avert it? I experience a horrible revulsion of feeling when I realise that at any moment the porter may appear in sight, bearing my hated purchases.

I retire from the breakfast room precipitately, and pace the library in bitter mortification of spirit. I realise at last how thoroughly I have been imposed upon. With a fresh significance, yesterday's scene rises before me. Like a flash of lightning I recall the figure, too tall for a woman's—the flaxen hair, unnaturally fair, the soft, almost inaudible voice, always suspiciously lowered, the close and persistent veiling despite the oppression of the day.

I recall it with a sharp pang.

I have already occupied some time in like cheering ruminations, when wheels sound on the gravel, and I rush hastily to the window. It is a carriage, an open one, containing, of all undesirable people, the most undesirable—Mrs. Seymour and her daughter Laura.

At this somewhat late stage in my narrative, and in a mere parenthesis, I must explain that Laura and I are supposed to have a mutual liking for one another; which mutual liking, being zealously fostered by the different members, of both our families, promises fair to develop into something more serious. Their appearance at this most unfortunate moment proves for me the proverbial "last straw." I sink into a chair and try to arrange my thoughts. If my eyes do not belie me, I can distinguish some kind of a light vehicle in the distance. It must be my ill-fated purchases. I have the feeling of a leaden weight tugging at the region of my heart. At this moment a servant appears announcing the arrival of Mr. Smith.

I quit my station at the window, and stumble downstairs to my father's private room. A small, square man occupies the chair facing my relative, who regards me as I enter with a kind of withering scorn, just such a look as I have been picturing to myself.

"You are probably acquainted with Mr. Smith's business?" he remarks with sarcastic interrogation.

I forbear from a reply, unable to make a civil one. Mr. Smith hereupon enters into fluent details, the drift of which I take to be that all the "rubbish" as my father elegantly phrases it, which I had yesterday collected so ingeniously, must be transferred this very day to its rightful owner, who I understand to be Lady Broadford. I do not wait further than to learn what is required of me, but as soon as possible beat a hasty retreat.

Luncheon hour is approaching. A little behind time I cross the hall on my way to the dining room. I am late; I can distinguish voices and laughter through the closed door. I halt for a second. Can I believe my ears? My father is actually rehearsing the whole story, if one might judge from sounds, to an appreciative audience! At this moment his sudden demise would almost be grateful to me. My hand trembles on the door handle; but it is now or never, so I push it open and enter.

To this day my reminiscences of that luncheon are hazy. Suffice it to say that Laura behaved magnanimously throughout, and now that we are married, never reminds me of my first auction experience—need I ask it?—also my last.

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A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maitre Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge. During the sitting of a council appointed by the Pope to decide which of the King's two wives is his lawful consort, Montruel visits Mahmoud-el-Reis to urge him to fulfil his promise to murder Ingeburge without delay. In order to gain access to the Queen's presence, the two men arrange that Mahmoud shall feign sickness and be taken to the hospital attached to the Abbey, where the Queen is confined. Eric, being at work on the cathedral as a mason, overhears the plot and determines to save Ingeburge. Meanwhile the Saracen partakes of a drug which renders him unconscious, is conveyed to the Abbey by Montruel, and ministered to by the Queen herself. She is heavily veiled, and Mahmoud is unaware of her identity.

CHAPTER XV.

The Veil Lifted.

By a curious coincidence the Syrian said to Ingeburge at this moment:

"Maiden, if you will help me to have speech with the Queen alone, you shall have this purse of gold."

These words came in confirmation of her worst fears, and with the tears starting from her eyes she said tremulously:

"And you come from the King? It was his name that opened these doors to you?"

She knew she was an obstacle in his path, and the thought that he had sent this man to put an end to her young life, the idea that her lord and husband wanted to kill her that the man upon whom she had lavished such a wealth of love should only desire to be rid of her, tortured her far more than the mere dread of death itself. No thought of blame rested on the King in her generous heart, she was crushed by the sense that she had been found unworthy of his love: it was her duty to bow before the inscrutable will of the man to whom she had pledged her faith. It was better perhaps, that she should die, life held but little to attract her, save the faint hope that one day she might take her lawful place by her husband's side.

Eve's story was so confused in her mind, that she had no doubt about this dark, mysterious man being the assassin paid by Philip Augustus, to kill his unwanted wife.

Mahmoud-el-Reis, far from guessing who she was, and unable to see the workings of her face, was quite at a loss to account for her evident emotion, but he drew a bow at venture, and the arrow went home.

"Yes," he answered, "I come from the King."

"And the King gave you that purse?"

"Yes, the King himself."

"To bribe some poor soul to sell you the Queen's life, I suppose?" she continued, breathlessly awaiting his reply.

"You have guessed exactly."

Ingeburge gave a long low moan and fell back senseless.

* * * * *

The Syrian sprang from his couch, and knelt beside the prostrate Queen. He raised her veil and gazed with rapture on the pale, noble features, the fair neck round which soft little curls of golden hair were clustering lovingly, and the dark-fringed lids which concealed the eyes that he knew must be blue. It was his own statue in flesh and blood; He gave a low, wondering cry of delight, and passed his hand over his eyes to make sure that he had not fallen again into some feverish dream.

"Dilah!" he crooned caressingly, "Dilah! Is it not the same supple form, the same dear features, and broad, low brow, the same sweet sadness about the lips! Dilah! as she would have been born under the pale northern skies, with the golden sunlight in her hair and the blue of Heaven in her eyes!"

He bent down and kissed the white brow with lips and heart as pure as those of a man who kisses his dead child, murmuring:

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"Dilah, my beloved, I greet thee! I will love and guard thy twin soul!"

The minutes passed, and the Abbey was wrapped in sleep, save for a few silent watchers like himself, and the moonlit garden lay deserted beneath the old grey walls; but far away in the city there raged a tumult and the sound penetrated now and again as far as the Abbey St. Martin, but the Syrian heeded nothing while he looked on the still unconscious form beside him. He had placed his pillow beneath her head and moistened her lips and brow with water. Now he was kneeling with bowed head and clasped hands as a devotee at the shrine of his divinity, awaiting her return to life.

It came at last, and he gently passed his hand under the pillow to raise her slowly. She opened her eyes and looked round with that half-vacant, inquiring glance that marks the mind's return from a state of oblivion.

"I have been dreaming," she whispered faintly. "Where are you, Eve, my sister?"

"The very voice is the same," thought Mahmoud, and tears dimmed the eyes of this hardy son of the desert for a moment. All his fierceness, all his fanatic pursuit of blood were forgotten in the memory of the woman he loved so fondly.

When Ingeburge's eyes rested on the dark face, with its almost adoring expression, she shuddered and raised her hands to shut out the painful sight, moaning:

"Ah, it was no dream! The assassin! The assassin!"

A look of pain crossed the Syrian's face and he said gently:

"Madame, as you seem to love the Queen so dearly, she shall be guarded from all ill. Do not tremble so, the mere sight of your face has made me your slave. Yet, do not mistake, there is no love in my heart for you, maiden, my words need bring no blush to your fair cheeks. I would protect you and your Queen as a man shields a dear sister or his own child."

As her fears seemed in no way to diminish, he added, with one of his rare, grave smiles.

He bent down and kissed the white brow.

"What do you fear from me? Just now you were lying there at my mercy!"

This was one of those simple, lucid arguments, that never fail to bring conviction even to the most confused brain, and her face cleared.

"That is true, he might have killed me then!" she thought, and the change in his voice went far to reassure her. It had lost all the suppressed fierceness, the cold, cruel tone in which he had bartered for her blood had vanished, and he spoke in respectful tenderness.

Ingeburge was little versed in the ways of the world, she had a sweet, sunny nature that was quick to think well of others, and her sad experiences had made her very susceptible to any kindness, so she smiled in return and asked timidly:

"What had the Queen done to you? And why were you chosen to carry out the King's cruel intentions?"

"I deceived you, maiden, but now that I have seen your face, I can deceive you no more, I would rather die. It was not by the *King's* orders that I was to kill the Queen!"

She clasped her hands on her breast and raised her eyes to Heaven as her heart went out in deep thankfulness to God. Again she looked eagerly at the Syrian's face, for it seemed to her as that of a stranger, so completely had love and tenderness transformed it.

"Thank you," she said at last, "you cannot know what joy your words give me, my brother."

"*Your brother!*" he repeated thoughtfully, as if this term used in Christian charity to the sick and suffering, had gained a new significance for him.

"But," persisted Ingeburge, "if you did not come by the King's command, why did you want to assassinate the Queen?"

"That would be a long story to tell you, maiden," answered the Moslem in a sad tone, "and you would not understand me, for you and I have neither the same manners nor the same faith."

"What?" cried Ingeburge, "are you not a Christian?"

Mahmoud-el-Reis rose to his full height, and folding his arms across his breast, replied solemly:

"There is but one God, Who is God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

Ingeburge started as if she had been stung, and shrank back into the farthest corner of the cell as if to escape contamination from any further contact with the man who had confessed to be what her faith taught her to regard as a child of Satan.

"Ah, I knew you would shrink from me with abhorrence," he said in a voice of infinite pathos, "but I told you the truth because I had seen your face, and it is the face of Dilah, my beloved—so I could not deceive you, even at the risk of losing your regard."

The Queen listened to the Moslem with growing wonder and decreasing repugnance. She had never heard that sweet sounding name of Dilah, and yet it seemed to strike some chord of memory in her breast, as of one loved and lost in a past stage of existence.

The poetic Eastern belief that each soul has its twin, which shares every joy and sorrow, even though their bodily presence may be wholly unknown to each other, would account for the inexplicable change of mood, entirely independent of our surroundings, which all of us know so well. It would explain the indefinable sense of sadness when all is bright around us, and the joy in the mere fact of being alive, and able to draw in our breath, which cheers us when outward circumstances have not altered very materially. Latter-day cynics and men of science would tell us it all depended on the state of our digestion, and so it probably does, but there may be more in the pretty fancy than we deem.

Mahmoud had sunk into one of his reveries, but he roused himself and asked gravely:

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"Maiden, do you love?"

In any other stranger such a question would have seemed to her as the height of idle curiosity, but this man, in spite of his confession, still dominated her strangely.

"Yes, I do love."

"Do you love ardently? Do you love passionately?"

"Yes," she replied again, her large blue eyes dilating as she spoke, "I love ardently, I love passionately."

"So that you would die for the man you had chosen?"

"Die! yes, a thousand deaths, were it possible to save m."

"Then he is happy," said the Syrian, as if thinking aloud.

Poor Ingeburge bent her head to hide the tears that came welling to her eyes at the thought that the one upon whom all this love was bestowed only requited it by coldness and neglect.

"I wanted to kill the Queen," he resumed, "because a man said to me, 'I will give you the life of the King in exchange for that of the Queen.'"

Again a flash of light seemed to cross Ingeburge's memory, and the tangled skein of Eve's story began to unravel itself before her mind's eyes with distracting clearness.

"Mad, wicked, that I was!" she cried, "to have suspected for one moment that the noble heart of Philip Augustus could be capable of so base a crime! That man wanted to kill the King himself!"

She stopped, and paused as if trying to recall a name, that of the other assassin who had figured in Eve's narrative.

"Amaury Montruel—" began Mahmoud.

"Yes! that's the name, that's it!" interrupted Ingeburge; "He's the one who wanted to kill me, Eve said so!"

"To kill *you?*" echoed the Moslem, in surprise.

"To kill me, the Queen of France."

He was silent for some moments, during which time a fierce struggle raged in his breast, between the implacable fanaticism of his creed and the tender chivalry of his love.

"The Queen!" he repeated, and his dark eyes fell before the calm dignity of her gaze.

"Yes, the Queen," cried Ingeburge passionately, "and I say the same words to you as did that traitor. I will give you the Queen's life in exchange for that of the King! I tell you——" She broke off, her voice was choked with sobs, and she knelt before him with clasped hands and tear-dimmed eyes pleading for the life of her beloved.

"I tell you again, take the Queen's life in exchange for that of the King!"

With a convulsive movement of her little hands she parted the neck of her dress as if to lay bare her breast to the assassin's knife; but the Moslem never raised his downcast eyes, and only murmured:

"You love, in very deed, but you love too well, for you are not loved in return."

"I ask for death and you only torture me!" she moaned.

"I am beloved," continued the Moslem with some return of his old hauteur, "I am beloved, and she whom my soul loves awaits my coming, but before this cruel separation that wounds both our hearts can have an end, I must kneel at my master's feet and show him this dagger's point crimsoned with the blood of Philip Augustus!"

He had drawn out the crystal poniard, and now held it above his head, where the rays from the lamp fell upon it, and made it sparkle like a thousand gems. Ingeburge's brain reeled with horror as he concluded:

"That is why I sought to kill the Queen."

Silence followed, only broken by the low moaning sobs that Ingeburge could not repress, and far away boomed the hoarse roar that had been faintly heard before. Now for the first time the Syrian became aware of it. It was increasing, it seemed to be coming nearer, and for a moment he listened attentively, but soon turned away with a gesture of indifference.

"It has nothing to do with me," he thought.

Had it nothing to do with him? Perhaps it had more than he surmised; a few hours would show.

Parted the neck of her dress as if to lay bare her breast to the assassin's knife.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Light in the Tower.

Eric had lingered in the vicinity of the Abbey till nightfall. Three times he had sought admittance at the gate, only to be sternly refused; but he was nothing daunted for his was one of those slow, strong natures, without brilliant ideas, but possessed of that dogged determination and boundless patience which usually win in the end.

It had taken many long months to reach the land where his beloved Princess was in captivity and disgrace, but he had never lost heart. He seemed to live to protect those two foster sisters, whose destinies were linked by a mysterious chain, and though he did not underrate his own weakness, his will was strong and his heart bold to die for them if needs be.

He knew the Syrian assassin had been admitted to the Abbey, and was therefore under the same roof as the Queen, but he also knew that it would also take some hours for the death-like effects of the marvellous drug to work off, and that until the man regained consciousness, Ingeburge was safe. Another respite would be afforded by the difficulty that the patient would find in getting to any other part of the Abbey from the hospital, as Eric knew from personal experience. He had been laid up more than once in the infirmary of a religious house, from accident and other maladies consequent on his dangerous trade, and it had always proved next to impossible to have any communication with the interior of the monastery.

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Then, shading his eyes, he looked again.

He therefore waited for the friendly darkness in a fairly calm state of mind; but the hours dragged heavily and his ever-present anxiety for Eve's safety weighed upon his spirits and blunted his perceptions. His only idea was to climb the outer wall as soon as it should be safe for him to attempt it, and after that his mind was a blank. If only Eve had been with him! Where was she? and why had the King wanted to see "Little Adam," who mixed the mortar for his brother? No answer was forthcoming to these perplexing questions, and his heart-strings tightened as the dreadful thought crossed his mind—"Perhaps I shall never see her again!"

At last the sun sank beneath the horizon, and about the time when Ingeburge was taking up her post by the assassin's bed-side, Eric crept into the thickest of the bushes and took up his post close to the ivy-covered walls, under a large oak through whose branches he could see the dark towers of the Abbey.

Behind those grim, fortress-like walls, he knew that his Queen Angel was a captive, and he scanned every window, wondering if any that he could see lighted the prison chamber of his royal mistress.

Would the darkness never come? He longed to scale the walls and so remove one barrier, at least, from between them.

At the farthest extremity of the Abbey he noticed a small tower, which was still bathed in the crimson afterglow that lighted up the little casements till they shone like patches of fire against the grey masonry.

"Perhaps she lives there!" he mused. "Our poor sister Angel, cut off from all that she holds dear!"

At this moment one of the windows was pushed open and a woman, dressed in white, leant out and looked round on the peaceful evening scene. Eric sprang to his feet, and climbing one of the lower branches, sought to gain a better view of the figure. He could not distinguish more than the general outline, but that seemed familiar, and he murmured under his breath:

"It's the Queen herself!"

Then, shading his eyes, which were dazzled by the glow, he looked again, long and eagerly, straining every nerve to read those far-off features. Something in the turn of the head made his heart beat faster, and his breath came in quick, short gasps as he thought:

"No, it's Eve! my little sister Eve! Ah, if only it might be so!"

The light faded, and the figure became indistinct, merged in the haze of the deepening twilight.

"It can't have been Eve! I must have been mistaken, for how could she have got there? My eyes seem to see her everywhere since I lost her," said the poor fellow sadly to himself.

He resumed his seat on the grass and continued his mournful reflections for some minutes, then a sound of music reached his ear, and he fancied he caught the strains of the old Masonic choral sung in a girl's clear young voice; but the wind carried the sounds away and the stillness was unbroken save for the distant buzz of the city.

He kept his eyes fixed on the tower, and as it grew darker he saw a light kindled in the casement upon which his attention was rivetted, so he determined to take this as a guiding star when he had entered the precincts of the Abbey.

Noiselessly he climbed the high wall and let himself down in the deserted garden. The maze of winding paths and close-cut hedges gave him a sense of utter bewilderment at first, but he kept the friendly light in view and crept along under the shade of the trees, making many circuitous turns to evade the danger of being seen from the windows.

Within the Abbey he could hear, from, time to time, the measured footsteps of the monks, and at intervals there rose the solemn chanting from the choir of the chapel.

Suddenly he stopped behind a

Eric threw up his hands, and gave a stifled cry of despair.

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large shrub and knelt down with his ear to the ground. The buzz of the city was increasing, it grew louder and louder, and the very ground seemed to tremble under the tramp of many feet.

"I wonder what that is?" thought Eric. "Perhaps the King is marching with his army against John of England, who they say has invaded his dominions. I wish he might get killed!"

With this very excusable, if not Christian, desire, he rose, and began to grope his way forward again, and after much difficulty he found himself beneath the tower. He carefully examined its position and the chances of being able to effect an entrance, but to his sorrow, he discovered that, even to an intrepid climber like himself, it would be impossible. There was a door opening into the garden, but it was heavily clamped with iron and studded with huge nails. Nothing less than a battering-ram would have forced an entrance there.

The utter hopelessness of his position for a moment nearly took away his courage, but he looked up at the still-lighted casement as if for inspiration.

"If only Eve were here, she would suggest something! She has always a clear head and a quick eye!"

A shadow crossed the window, and then he heard again the same sweet voice that had come to him under the trees an hour ago.

The old familiar words that had directed them out of their darkness and distress on the night of their arrival in Paris, now floated above his head, and, as on the previous occasion, he took up the answering refrain.

At first his notes were weak and quavering, but after the first few bars his voice gained strength, and before he had finished the verse it was certainly powerful enough to reach the singer above him. No answer came. The voice in the tower had ceased, and the shadow disappeared.

"Eve!" he called recklessly, "don't you hear me? Eve, my sister Eve?"

He saw the light extinguished, and still there was no sign in response to his passionate appeal.

"Eve, Eve, it's Eric, your brother!" he called louder.

"Silence!" whispered a voice which seemed to pierce the impenetrable door.

Then he noticed for the first time a small loop-hole above his head, and the next moment the massive door swung slowly on its hinges and his little sister was clasped in his loving arms.

For some seconds neither could find words to express their joy at this unlooked for re-union; but Eric, knowing that every moment was now precious if they were to avert the threatened danger from the Queen, asked quickly:

"Where's Queen Angel?"

"Oh, our dear sister Angel is as good and sweet as ever. She has just obtained leave to go and nurse one of the sick men in the hospital."

Eve did not notice at first what an effect her words had upon her brother, and continued merrily:

"But how did you get in? And how did you know I was here? Have you seen the page Albret?" At the last name her cheek flushed slightly, but as Eric made her no answer, she looked hard at him and saw in the dusk that his face was stern and set, his eyes dilated with horror, and as she seized his hand, she felt it was cold and trembling.

"Eric, dear, what is the matter?" she cried anxiously.

"Tell me, was this sick man brought here to-day?" he asked, regardless of her questions.

"Yes; but what has he to do with you?"

"At what time?"

"About twelve, I think."

"And how long has the Queen been with him?"

"Oh, more than an hour now."

Eric threw up his hands and gave a stifled cry of despair.

"Heaven have mercy on her—Heaven help us all!" he repeated wildly.

Eve put her arms round him, for he staggered and would have fallen. The long strain of watching and waiting with this terrible load upon his mind, coupled with the fact that he had taken nothing since his early breakfast, which had been of the most frugal kind, had proved almost too much for him.

Eve tried to persuade him to sit down on the grass, but he refused, and propping himself up against the door, he gasped:

"Do you know the name of the man whom the Queen is nursing?"

Some of his fear had communicated itself to Eve, for her voice trembled as she whispered:

"Tell me!"

"He is called Mahmoud-el-Reis, and the traitor Amaury Montruel has promised to give the King's life into his hands so soon as Queen Angel has fallen under his dagger!"

Eve's face blanched, and she had to steady herself by the wall as she cried:

"But how do you know all this? The man looked like one dead they tell me, when he was carried in here."

In a few hurried words Eric told his sister of what he had witnessed that morning, and how he had helped to carry the Syrian from the city, in the hope of warning Ingeburge of her awful danger.

"The only thing we can do is to seek Prior Anselm," said Eve at last, "he will do all he can to help and shield our dear Angel."

"There is no time to be lost," said Eric quickly.

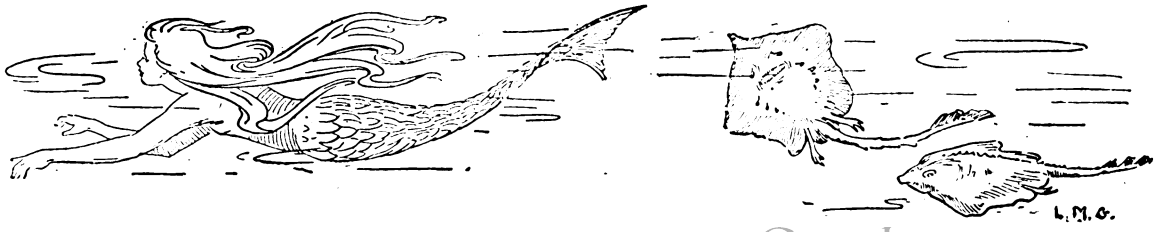
"No, I will send to him at once, but I must hide you in the Queen's rooms till I have permission to take you to the Prior, or else the lay brothers and the guards would turn you out again."

So saying, she drew him inside the door and closed it gently. Then they mounted the dark spiral staircase, and, after putting her brother in a place of security, Eve went off to gain an interview with good Prior Anselm.

It needed all her tact and ready wit to prevail upon one of the sleepy monks who was keeping watch in the chapel to go and tell the Prior that he was wanted on a matter of vital importance, but at last she gained her way, and in a few minutes, Eric was summoned to the presence of Anselm.

Meanwhile Ingeburge's life was in the hand of the Syrian fanatic, and the tumultuous sounds from the city were approaching with every passing minute. Those in the Abbey were too engrossed to notice them, or failed to discover any personal import in them, yet that swelling roar was to affect the destinies of more than one of those who passed it by unheeded.

(To be continued.)



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A. D.—Millions of old corks are found in the Thames annually. They are sold for different purposes. Some are said to be used for packing between the plates of iron ships.

Bunny.—There is an immense rabbit warren in Norfolk, where the visitors may see, on fine evenings in the warm weather, hundreds of rabbits running in and out of their burrows. The lessee of the warren makes about £600 a year out of it. He drives the rabbits out of the burrows by means of paraffin oil, and he has to pay something like £200 a year for the oil and labour.

S. N.—The "White General" was the Russian General Skobeloff, who distinguished himself in the war with Turkey twenty years ago, and was the hero not only of the army but also of the people generally. He was supposed to have died some time ago, but there is a wide-spread belief in Russia that he is not dead. Many people are of opinion that he took part in the late war between China and Japan. The exact reason for the deception, if it be a deception, is not known; but strange things happen in the empire of the Tsar. Three or four years ago, for instance, there was a report—backed by good evidence—that a former Tsar had not died as stated to the world, but had abdicated and retired to a country house far in the interior, where he ended his days.

L. C.—The first regular effort to instruct the deaf and dumb was made by Pedro de Ponce, a Spanish monk, in 1570.

Country Maiden writes: "According to reports I have heard, there seem to be no birds in London but a few smutty sparrows. Is this so?"———Gracious, no. There is plenty of bird life to be found without moving more than a mile or two from the heart of the metropolis. Many of the London gardens possess rookeries, nearly every London square and garden has its starlings, and every spring wood pigeons come to these same gardens. Nightingales may be heard four miles in any direction from Charing Cross, and the Tower of London is quite a favourite nesting place for jackdaws.

Martha would like to know what is the difference between black and white pepper, and if they are products of different plants?———Black and white pepper both come from the same shrub, and the only difference between them is that with the latter the berries are stripped of their outer skin or covering before being ground, and retained in the former.

Rowan Ash asks what I consider to be the world's favourite colour?———There is a regard for things red all the world over. This colour was once held sacred to Thor, the God of Lightning; and Grimm suggests that the robin has probably been singled out for reverence on account of its red breast. Highland women tie a piece of red worsted thread to their cows' tails before turning them out to grass for the first time in the spring to protect them from the evil eye. In China something red is tied round children's wrists as a safeguard against evil spirits, and in that country red holds a prominent place in all religious and social ceremonies.

Sailor.—The title "Admiral" is derived by some authorities from the word *amir* or *emir*, a chief. In the sense of a naval commander it was introduced into Europe by the Venetians in the fourteenth century.

Malcolm.—Yes, it is a fact that both the first and the last stand of the Confederates in the American Civil War took place on land owned by the same man. A part of the Bull Run battlefield was the property of Mr. McLean; after that battle, he decided to move to some spot where there would not be so much risk of suffering from the ravages of war. He took up his abode at Appomattox, which, by a strange coincidence, proved to be the final battlefield of the Civil War.

"Do we get thinner in the summer?" is the question put by S. R. T.———No; on the contrary the human frame has a tendency to increase in weight during the summer, and to waste in the winter. This fact is the result of experiments by an eminent doctor upon 4,000 criminals.

Having heard that tea tasters are well paid, Apollo would like to become one. He has also heard, however, that it is extremely injurious to the health, and writes to ask if this is the case.———No. The tasting operation has been practically eliminated in all but the name, tea being now tested by sight and smell. Boiling water is first poured on an accurately-measured portion of the leaves. In a few minutes the liquid shows some tint of green or brown, and the length of this time and the shade of the colour produced are important elements in the test. The tester then inhales the rising steam from the mixture. This is called "getting the aroma," and is the most important part of the test.

L.—Yes. Liverpool was made an independent port as long ago as 1338. In 1672 the income from the estates of the Corporation was about £13; it is now as many millions.

Inquisitive asks: "Has any monarch laid claim to the greater part of Europe? I mean in historic times. Napoleon I. seemed to have had a good slice of it, but I don't think he ever included this country."———The former Kings of Sardinia laid claim to a tolerably large portion, judging from their description of themselves. It was "King of Sardinia, of France, Spain and England, of Italy and Jerusalem, of Greece and Alexandria, of Hamburg and Sicily." To this they added a few more modest titles, such as "Master of the Deep." But, in the words of the poet, where is that party now?

T. C. asks: "Which wind is the most prevalent in England?"———The south-west; it blows on almost twice as many days in the year as any other wind.

Carpenter.—In times past, Greek and Roman doors opened outwards, and when a man was about to go from the house into the street he knocked on the door so that he should not hurt anyone who might be passing.

Cricket writes: "Has anyone ever stood on the cross of St. Paul's? I think I have 'stumped' you this time."———Not out! About twenty-five years ago, when the cathedral was undergoing repair, one of the men stood on the cross and gazed round with apparent unconcern. At the coronation of Queen Mary a Dutchman named Peter "stood on the weathercocke of Paule's steeple," and performed various antics "to the great marvell of all people." He had two scaffolds under him—one above the cross and another over the ball of the cross, each bedecked with streamers. The torches on the scaffolds "could not burne, the wind was so great." The city paid him sixteen pounds thirteen shillings for the performance.

C. C.—There are only twenty-seven wooden ships in the Navy at the present time.

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THOUSANDS of REPEAT ORDERS & UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

"SHORT STORIES" COUPON.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. for amount we guarantee to send any goods as above.
THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

BRUSSELETTE CARPETS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD.

Seamless, Woven, and Reversible, Rich Turkey Patterns and Colourings, Superior Quality, with Handsome Border to match; a Marvel of Excellence and Beauty.

Lot 60. No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9 0 by 6 0		5/6	9/0
2	9 0 by 7 6		7/0	11/9
3	9 0 by 9 0		8/6	13/6
4	10 6 by 7 6		8/9	13/9
5	10 6 by 9 0		10/0	15/6
6	12 0 by 9 0		11/6	18/0

Lot 60. No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12 0 by 10 6		13/6	20/6
8	13 6 by 10 6		15/3	24/0
9	12 0 by 12 0		15/3	24/0
10	13 6 by 12 0		17/0	27/0
11	15 0 by 12 0		19/0	32/0
12	18 0 by 12 0		22/9	36/0

These Carpets are splendid imitations of real Brussels Carpets, the designs having been carefully copied from the originals, both as regards colourings and patterns, so that when in use it is almost impossible, except by close scrutiny, to detect the difference. All designs are registered, and deservedly considered works of art. We can confidently recommend them for use in the dining and drawing rooms, or any rooms and landings where hard wear is a necessity.

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As an advertisement for the introduction of these goods to all readers of *Short Stories* we have decided to give away to every purchaser a very handsomely-woven Hearthrug, 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, to match carpets in colours, etc.

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In Reversible Rich Turkey patterns, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft wide. These Hearthrugs have gained a world-wide reputation for Magnificence, Cheapness, and Utility, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of *repeat orders* and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 for 5/9, 6 for 11/3, 12 for 22/-.

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6ft. by 9ft. 7/6	9ft. by 9ft. 11/-	10½ft. by 12ft. 18/-	12ft. by 15ft. 25/6
8ft. by 9ft. 9/-	9ft. by 10½ft. 13/6	12ft. by 12ft. 21/-	12ft. by 18ft. 30/-
6ft. by 12ft. 10/6	9ft. by 12ft. 15/-	9ft. by 15ft. 19/6	12ft. by 21ft. 35/6
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Extraordinarily Heavy, very best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra-Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years, and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

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SPECIAL. **Specially Reduced** **1898.**

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With FREE GIFT enclosed.

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average size 6ft. by 3ft., perfection in quality.

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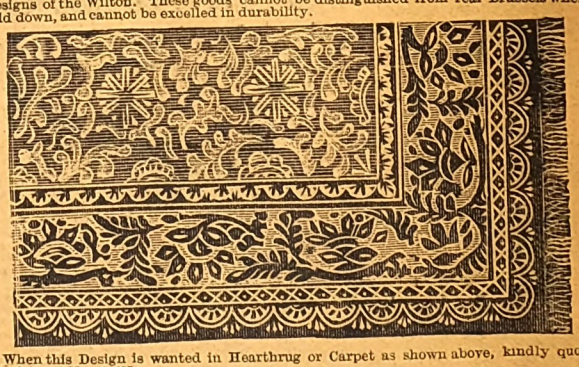

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	9ft. by 9ft. ..... 7s. 6d.		12ft. by 13½ft. ..... 14s. 6d.
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SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4/3, 6 for 8/-, or 12 for 15/6. Sterling Value

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BIG BATTLE IN THE CHANNEL IMMINENT. (See Page 586.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 488. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 7TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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PRICE ONLY
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This Costume also looks well in the pretty **Edinboro' Tweed**, price
18/6
PATTERNS FREE.

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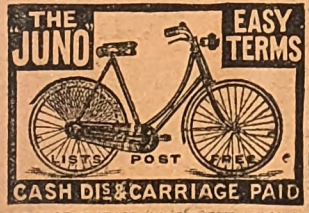

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WONDERFUL OFFER

A SOLID SILVER WATCH GIVEN AWAY.

SEND NO MONEY.

In order to introduce my name into every household in the Kingdom, I undertake and guarantee to give away one of my "World-Famed £2 Silver Watches," list price, Ladies' or Gentlemen's, to every reader who sends me the correct reading of the Rebus printed below. I am preparing to send out immediately 2,000 of these watches. This is a perfectly genuine competition, and the only thing you have to do is carry out the conditions, and if you succeed in guessing correctly you have the advantage of our truly wonderful offer.

These pictures represent three well-known English Wild Flowers. The conditions of the Competition are that you find out what these flowers are, and if you are correct you undertake to purchase one of my inexpensive Solid Silver Chains. These chains are the best made, are marvellous value. Money returned if dissatisfied. Send at once, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope, so that I may inform you if correct.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 488.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending May 7th, 1898.

IN A LANE.

The Tramp shuffled wearily into the lane. It was an ordinary country lane; a farmhouse and low wall on one side, on the other a hedge of tall trees. The Tramp shuffled into it from the high road because he was dead beat. He did not know to where it led; he didn't much care. He would have thrown himself down on the grassy bank under the trees, but the Farmer stood at the gate, watching. For very shame the tired man shuffled on. He dared not even ask for food—he had been refused so often lately. Besides, he had taken the edge off his appetite with sundry herbs and berries, and, it must be confessed, with a turnip stolen from a well-filled field. Hunger has a wonderful way of altering one's moral views. Necessity knows no law, human or divine.

The Tramp ambled along as slowly as he could, keeping his weather eye on the red-bearded farmer. He muttered swear words to himself, anathematizing the whole agricultural population. He consigned Red-Beard to a climate less severely frigid than that of the Arctic Regions.

The Farmer stood watching him suspiciously. So many queer characters were about, and you never knew.

Edited By G. Arthur Pearson.

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The crops were rather a failure this year. He couldn't afford to have any of his live-stock stolen, and this out-at-elbows tramp, with his furtive glance, his dawdling gait, his long thin arms and fingers—the Farmer noticed these—looked none too honest. He wished the Tramp would take his hook and be—well, condemned.

"Hey, there!" he called at last. "What's your game—hangin' about here?"

The Tramp started violently and stopped. He came back a step or so, mumbling.

"Speak up, man!" shouted the Farmer. "I can't hear them silent phonographs!"

"I'm only a tramp; haven't a thing on me except these rags, Farmer," said Out-at-Elbows. "I'm tryin' to get to Workleigh yonder, to look for a job. I'm dead beat."

His last sentence ended in a wheedling snivel. It was getting second nature to him now.

"Better hurry on then," said the Farmer, ramming his red hands in his pockets. "We hain't no work here nor no charity neither. We've enuff to do to keep our own end up. We've got two fine dogs, though, with good, sound teeth."

He paused, to let the intelligence sink into the Tramp's mind. Then, feeling a little relieved of his suspicions, he fished out a penny.

"Take that and be off!" he grunted shortly. "It's all you'll get here, and a wonder you've got that!"

The Tramp took it servilely, touched his forehead and mumbled incoherent thanks, then shuffled on again. The Farmer chuckled to himself, and went in, putting the peg of the chain in the staple on the inside of the gate. The moment he was out of sight the Tramp crossed the lane and dossed on the turf. A low gorse bush hid him from the farm house.

"Something like," he jerked, with an imprecation. He kicked off his boots. They had been a misfit of somebody's, and certainly were never made for him. He stretched his long arms, pillowed his head in his hands, and went to sleep. A new melody soon mingled with the chirping of the birds, the buzzing of the insects, the rustle of the leaves in the breeze. The flies made a cluster over him, but they did not stay. The gnats that bite one in the shade of trees and among long grass did not bite him. His tramp's blood was not rich enough for those tiny beasts of prey. A tramp's blood is often deficient in the red corpuscles.

He slept awhile undisturbed. The blazing heat of noon scorched his thin face. The heat passed and the shadow of the trees fell over him again. Some time towards the end of the afternoon a creeping thing of some kind got in his open mouth and woke him. He sat up, spluttering it out, and rubbed his eyes.

"Must be getting on," he thought, and glancing over the bush, looked up and down the lane. The farmyard gate was still shut, but he heard a dog barking. No one was in sight. He noticed, inconsequently, that the column of smoke from the kitchen chimney rose straight upwards; that the western sky was taking a pale, red tinge. Fine weather to-morrow, whatever good that might be.

He put on his boots, got to his feet awkwardly, and went on shuffling up the lane. From the look of things it promised to be a short cut to the town, whose smoke hung like a shroud over the valley yonder. He walked in the middle of the road; a solitary figure on the crown of the macadam. The evening was very still and beautiful. The smell of the hay was in the air; the mellowed peal of church bells floated up from the village down there on the right. But for that he would not have troubled to remember that it was Wednesday night.

After all, what was Wednesday to him, more than any other revolution of the earth? He was an outcast of society; one of the "manufactured residuum of civilization;" a man without any use in the universe. He was one of those, he thought,—he had once, in more fortunate days, attended a course of lectures on "*Physics and Politics*"—who were being crushed underfoot in the march of Progress. He was one of the unnecessary; one of the unfit: it followed naturally that he must go under. The race of life is to the swift, the battle to the strong, the prize to the clever. The fittest must survive. Nature knows no other mark of merit. She gives life recklessly, uses it carelessly, takes it away ruthlessly. Why not? Yet—he held his solitary penny in his fist until it burnt him as a circle of fire. Somehow, the memory of those lectures, blurred by this time, it is true, was little comfort to him. To-morrow stared him in the face. Better have been born an animal, without reason. Animals, at least, take no thought nor heed for the morrow, what they shall eat nor what they shall *drink*.

He was now near the end of the lane, where it came at right angles into another. He was startled out of his maudlin reflections by the sound of a child's sobbing. The sound came nearer. He saw something red bobbing up and down now and then over the edge of the stone wall, and nearing the corner. Now the sobs ceased, stifled, now they broke out again violently.

"Some kid in trouble," he jerked out. "Funny thing—what kids cry for!"

Just then the red object reached the corner of the wall. It was the red "soot-bag" cap of a little girl. She turned into the lane and came on, meeting the Tramp. He looked at her curiously, and stopped; he didn't know why. I suppose if it had been a little boy he would have shuffled on carelessly. But it wasn't, so there's an end of speculation.

She was a pretty little thing, though she was doing her best to make herself ugly. Her cheeks were like rosy red apples, her hair was sunny gold, her eyes were large and blue. The blue-serge dress and little white apron she wore suited her small figure well. At present the said apple cheeks were disfigured with the courses of tears, and the blue eyes ringed with dirt that the chubby knuckles had rubbed in. The Tramp somehow felt sorry for that, though he didn't want to feel sorry for anyone's misfortunes just then. When he stopped, she stopped too; ceased her sobbing and looked up at him wonderingly. She was yet too young to understand the sanctity of social distinctions. Out-at-Elbows felt that he must say something.

"What's matter, little 'un?" he asked.

The chubby knuckles, half-raised to the blue eyes, dropped again. The blue eyes opened wide, showing very moist with imminent tears.

"I'se—lost—it," she said, parting each syllable with a breath and a sob.

"Lost what?"

"I'se lost—it," she repeated. It never occurred to her that anyone would be ignorant of what "it" was. "I'se lost it, an' dad'll be so cross. He'll——"

But at contemplation of what "dad" would do, her sobbing broke out afresh. The blue eyes were eclipsed again. The Tramp felt still more curious.

"But what's it you've lost, little 'un?" he asked, sticking his hands in his pockets and striking an in-

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terrogative attitude. The little girl put down her doubled fists an'inch or so.

"She gave it me to buy some 'judes at Mrs. Sandlin's, and I wasn't to have 'nother for a w-eek."

The Tramp guessed "judes" must be jujubes, and Mrs. Sandlin's a sweetstuff shop in some near village. "She," of course, was mother. Grim irony, come to think of it, this kid crying because she couldn't spoil her teeth with that rubbish, and he—well, his luck. Little Blue-Eyes went on, feeling better for telling her trouble.

"An' it was on'y a penny, and I hadn't had one since Sunday, an' dad says, mustn't never get pennies lost, cos it's bad prin-ci-ple."

She brought out the last word with an effort, yet with a touch of pride in the accomplishment of so big a piece of language.

"Whereabouts did you drop it?" queried Out-at-Elbows. "We might come across it yet."

"Dunno. It's long way to Mrs. Sandlin's, and—dunno."

Then a new idea came into her little mind. She looked up at the Tramp hopefully.

"You'se big. Do you know anywhere where little girls can get pennies—when they'se lost theirs? There must be somewhere—when they'se really lost their pennies."

The justice of her logic seemed perfect in her eyes, but the Tramp shook his head. He had never observed much justice, anyway. "Don't think so," he said gravely. Then an odd idea came into *his* mind. Something in his pocket burnt his fingers. He could not help the ghost of a smile at the very thought of that. The blue eyes were quick to notice every change of feature, and they filled with tears again.

"I'se goin'," she said. "You'se no good."

That settled him. He didn't feel much of a hero; but it was perhaps the most unselfish act in his wasted life.

"Here, little 'un," he said huskily. "I reckon that'll stop you crying. An' you'd better be running to Mrs. Sandlin's if you want to get home afore it's dark."

The chubby fingers closed on the coin greedily. Her face brightened. It was sun after shower.

"Thank you," she said, with childish politeness. Then, ignoring her former verdict with sublime indifference: "I knowed you'd help me. But I'se goin' home now. It's far away to Mrs. Sandlin's, an' I can go in the mornin'. Shan't get it lost 'gain!"

She clutched the precious coin tightly, and was ready to go; began walking on down the lane. But the Tramp was yet curious. He wanted to know one thing more—and felt sure of the answer as the thought flashed across him.

"Say, little 'un; where do you live?"

"That's our house," she said, pointing to the solitary farm behind him. "That's Carlo barkin'. It's suppertime."

She ended with a child's abruptness, and started running. Out-at-Elbows watched her little figure down the path, noticing uninterestedly how queerly the tail of her soot-bag cap danced on her little shoulders. He saw her open the gate and turn in; heard the click of the peg in the staple again.

Then the Tramp spoke rapidly but vividly under his breath, and shuffled wearily out of the lane. The sun was now setting in a sea of crimson and gold.

GEORGE C. WALLIS.

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"By Jove, I know that woman!" exclaimed Sellon.

"You do? Where did you make her acquaintance?" asked his companion.

"Well, Crossland, perhaps it is going too far to say that I know her," returned Sellon, not noticing the other's tone of surprise. "But I recognise in her a girl whom I was able to save from being run over in London some years ago. I feel certain she is the same. She gave promise of becoming a pretty woman; but she is more than pretty, she is positively beautiful! Fancy seeing her here in Kimberley!"

Crossland did not reply. There was a far away look in his eyes; he was meditating deeply.

Sellon was a diamond broker. He was distinguished from most gentlemen of his profession by his reputation for integrity; there was not the faintest breath of a suspicion that he had been engaged in any illicit transaction, and those who came into possession of stolen diamonds would as soon have thought of taking them to the detectives as to Sellon.

Crossland was reputed to be a man of independent means, who came to South Africa for the benefit of his health during the winter. He was a pleasant and well-informed man, and Sellon, who had but few friends among Kimberley people, had taken to him. This was the second winter that Crossland had spent there, so that they were quite old friends.

"What is she doing here? Do you know?" asked Sellon.

"Yes. She was doing a little on the variety stage in England," was the reply. "She determined to come out here because she thought she could make some sort of a sensation that would help her on her return to London. I was introduced to her in the old country."

"So you know her, then? You must introduce me to her. I shall see whether she is the girl I——."

"You seem rather smitten," laughed Crossland.

Sellon flushed.

"She is a beautiful woman," he remarked as coolly as he could. "I suppose she has an engagement?"

"No. She came out on the chance. Risky, but she is a plucky girl. She came over in the same boat as I did. I believe she has been doing a little in Cape Town."

Sellon went home to his rooms that evening full of the lovely face of the woman he had seen pass in the carriage. He had been proof against the charms of the ladies in Kimberley and elsewhere, but it seemed as if he were about to capitulate unconditionally to a woman whom he scarcely knew. He sat in his chair for an hour without moving; his thoughts were fixed on the vision of loveliness that had floated past him. Then he aroused himself with a sheepish smile.

"Nonsense!" he muttered. "I am a fool to be so taken with a pretty face. And what do I want with a wife?" He paused. "It *is* lonely here, though," he added with a sigh.

The next morning he was punctual in keeping his appointment with Crossland, who at once conducted him to the hotel where Miss Lane was staying. To Sellon's delight, she recognised him at once and received him with such warmth that he was intoxicated with pleasure and love.

"I have often thought of you since that time, Mr. Sellon!" she exclaimed, "and have wondered whether I should ever see you again. I have wanted so much to thank you again for your bravery."

"Oh, it was nothing—nothing," stammered Sellon in confusion. "Do you really mean to say that you have remembered me all this time?"

"I can honestly say that not one day has passed without my thinking of your noble action," she replied, with a look that increased Sellon's confusion.

Crossland then joined in the conversation and contrived to turn it to other subjects. A few minutes later he declared hurriedly that he must leave them, and took his departure.

Sellon was glad of the opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Lane, and when he left the hotel he was more infatuated than ever with the lovely artiste.

He called the next day and spent an hour with her; Crossland did not accompany him. It would have been impossible for Sellon to have given any idea of the conversation; he was now conscious that he was hopelessly in love with Alice, as he called her in his mind, and he cared for nothing else. He felt the soft touch of her hand upon his, he remembered the looks that had sunk deep into his heart, and the passionate longing to kiss the beautiful face that had been so close to his, was still with him.

For a week this went on. He saw her every day, and

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at last he determined to ask her to marry him. He had seen Crossland two or three times during the week, but it struck him that Crossland had wished to avoid him.

"Perhaps he is jealous of my conquest," thought Sellon. "I am sorry for him, if it is so, but——" He completed the sentence by a shrug of the shoulders.

There was a certain amount of nervousness, anxiety even, apparent in Miss Lane's demeanour as she received her lover that morning. Sellon noticed it, and as soon as they were seated on the couch he gently placed his arm round her waist and drew her head upon his shoulder.

"Alice—I must call you by that name, dear—what is it that makes you look so worried this morning? Confide all your troubles to me, little one, so that I may have the happiness of driving them away."

She nestled more closely to him and began to sob.

"Oh, Arthur, I am so unhappy!"

Sellon kissed her and tried to soothe her, but it was some time before he could persuade her to dry her eyes and tell him what troubled her.

"I am afraid of two men here, who have some evil designs against me," she said hesitatingly.

"Who are they?" demanded Sellon hotly.

"Don't get angry or you may make it worse for me," cried Alice. "One is a theatrical agent here and the other is—is—Mr. Crossland."

"Has Crossland dared—" began Sellon, jumping up and moving towards the door. She ran after him and pulled him back.

"You will spoil all," she exclaimed. "They are cunning, unscrupulous men—oh, that I had known it before! Listen," she continued hurriedly. "I cannot explain all, but I know there is only one way to escape them."

"And that is?"

"Someone must take me away," she answered, looking him straight in the eyes. "Someone must take me to Bloemfontein—quickly—to-night."

For a moment Sellon hesitated. He had come to offer her his hand, but an elopement or a runaway match had not entered his head. He caught the beseeching, bewitching glance of her piercing dark eyes, however, and all his scruples vanished.

"I came with the intention of asking you to be my wife, Alice. I will take you from here to-night, as you wish; and when we are out of Kimberley you shall explain it all to me. But why," he added, "do you wish to go to Bloemfontein?"

"Because it is a garden of flowers," she said softly, holding out her hands to him. "A path of flowers—will it not be symbolical of our future?"

"Yes, you are right, my darling," he whispered, pressing her to his breast. "I am too worldly; for me, Bloemfontein has hitherto been connected with diamond robberies—once in Bloemfontein, the thieves are safe. Forgive me for not remembering how pretty a place it is, and how natural that you should wish to go there to escape from your troubles."

He was about to kiss her again when they heard a gentle, but hasty knock at the door. Alice disengaged herself from her lover's embrace and went to the door. She opened it just a little and spoke to the person outside. A few sentences were rapidly exchanged in a low tone. Sellon could not see who it was, but he guessed from the voice that it was a coolie servant.

Alice closed the door and walked into the second room. She came out a moment later, holding a small package.

"How silly of him to interrupt," she cried playfully. "But you must go now, Arthur. And I want you to mind this packet for me." She hesitated a second, then continued: "Take care of it and do not fail to bring it with you this evening. Put it away in a pocket; where it will not be noticed—no, not in your breast pocket; it will

She came out a moment later, holding a small package.

bulge it out a little. Yes, that will do splendidly," she added as he placed it in one of his coat-tail pockets; "but be very careful of it."

He took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. A few whispered words passed between them, and she led him to the door.

"To-night, at nine o'clock, I will come for you," he said softly.

He opened the door; then started back in surprise. Two men, whom he recognised as detectives, had just reached it, and the foremost had raised his hand to knock. They entered without ceremony.

"What is the meaning of this visit, gentlemen?" he asked. All three men were looking away from Miss Lane, or they would have noticed the nervous twitching of her lips.

"We have authority to search these rooms, Mr. Sellon," replied the superior officer. "Mr. Crossland has been arrested for illicit dealing in diamonds. He has been watched and we have seen him enter this place to visit Miss Lane. We are trying to find the gems."

"We have authority to search these rooms."

"But you surely do not suspect this lady?" was all that Sellon could say. Crossland arrested! What did it mean?

"We have our orders, Mr. Sellon. You know we must obey."

Then the remembrance of the package flashed across Sellon's mind and a cold chill ran down his spine. Was it possible? Were Crossland and Alice accomplices? The low conversation with the coolie, the handing of the packet to him! Alice had been warned of the probable arrival of the detectives and had endeavoured to hurry him away with the stolen stones in order to save herself! But *could* it be so? His brain was in a whirl.

Then another horrible thought struck him. If the incriminating packet were discovered on his person! His good name would be gone and he would be ruined; it would not clear him if he made a clean breast of what he knew—suspicion would still rest upon him, even if his word were accepted for the main point—and then he would be giving *her* to certain imprisonment.

He wavered between love and duty; it was a trying ordeal. He cast a hesitating glance at Alice; she was looking at him with such a pleading expression that he was conquered. He would save her at any price! But could he elude the vigilance of the detectives in any way?

"Do you intend to submit me to the indignity of a search?" he asked haughtily.

"No, Mr. Sellon," replied the detective. "You are too well known to be suspected. We have no authority to do so, either. But we must search these rooms and—and we must ask Miss Lane to prove that she is not hiding them in her dress."

The young broker stifled a cry of relief, but now he hated himself! The detective's words cut him to the heart; he was above suspicion, yet he was aiding in the robbery!

The officers did their work, but found nothing. Sellon felt that he could not stay to talk to Alice; he remembered renewing his promise to call that evening in order to take her to Bloemfontein, but he recollected nothing of the walk home.

For the next few hours he suffered unspeakable mental anguish. Crossland was a thief; was Alice his accomplice? Had she not said that she was afraid of him? Did the package contain diamonds, after all? Had she not asked him to take her away before she had any knowledge of the arrest of Crossland and the arrival of the officers? He might have satisfied himself about the contents of the package by opening it, but his honourable nature repelled against this course, in spite of the events of the morning.

Gradually he grew calmer; and as his mind became more easy, his love for Alice assumed stronger hold upon him. No, he could not believe in her duplicity; it would be all right, she would explain it all! So, by the evening, he had become convinced that all was well. When we wish to see things in a certain light, we can soon bring ourselves to believe that they are as we desire them to be!

At nine o'clock punctually he was with her. He felt repaid for all he had done when she received him with that winning smile and raised her face, with a pretended pout on her rosy lips, for him to kiss.

It was not until they were bowling away in the trap and fairly within the territory of the Orange Free State that any reference was made to the incidents of the morning. Then he handed her the package.

"I have kept it safe for you," he said. "But it was a great risk. No, I did not open it."

She laughed softly.

"You have guessed what is in it?"

"Diamonds," he returned briefly. He did not care to talk on that subject; he wanted to forget it. He asked for no explanation; he desired, in his infatuation, to be oblivious of all save that she was his.

Suddenly she asked him to pull up.

"I think we passed something," she said. "It was like a huddled heap of humanity. Oh, do go back and see. I will stop here."

With a laugh at her anxiety, he sprang from the trap and retraced his steps. He had not gone very far, just round a bend in the road, when he heard a sound of a horse's hoofs. He hurried back to the bend. He saw the trap flying along and heard a mocking laugh.

He stood dumfounded. Then the truth forced itself upon him. He had been duped all along! She had pretended to be in love with him and had suggested the elopement with him for the sole purpose of using his reputation to enable her to get away from Kimberley, with her booty, in safety!

He did not attempt to follow her. He reviled himself for his infatuation and set his face towards Kimberley, to get back as best he could.

The following afternoon he saw Crossland in goal. He briefly stated what had passed and asked for an explanation. His pseudo friend, after some hesitation, gave him all the details of the scheme.

Crossland had carried out a number of transactions in diamonds and had escaped suspicion until within the last few days. When he discovered that he was watched he sent for Miss Lane, who was really his accomplice, to come from Bloemfontein to help him in a big deal of £20,000. It was his intention to pass the stones to her,

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so that she could take them away. There was some risk that she might be stopped, but they must take the chance.

At this point occurred the incident narrated at the commencement. This suggested the idea to Crossland. If Alice could contrive to fascinate Sellon, she could get away from Kimberley under the protection of his reputation; the fact that the broker fancied he recognised her was a trump card for the conspirators and we know how it was played. Their plans were precipitated; Crossland had an idea that the officers were becoming extra attentive, and it was resolved to get Alice away at once with the booty, which had just come into their possession. Hence the plan for the elopement.

"I tell you this," said Crossland coolly, "to set your mind at rest. I don't think you will split on me—if you do you must acknowledge your own complicity—and because—" He paused and a half-anxious look appeared on his countenance. "Hang it! I don't understand why she acted like that. It looks as if she intended to hoax us both and enjoy the proceeds with

Suddenly she asked him to pull up.

someone else! She is capable of it, I believe! I was relying upon your keeping her in view till I could arrive. They can't do anything to me here now that they have failed to find the stones."

Sellon left him in disgust. Crossland's theory proved correct; the duped diamond broker received a letter from from Miss Lane three days afterwards, in which she expressed her thanks for services rendered and begged him to inform Mr. Crossland that she and her friend Mr. Joyce, whom he would doubtless remember, would constantly think of him while they were enjoying the fruits of his biggest deal in diamonds.

Sellon has grown rich since then, and has had many a coy glance shot at him from a woman's eyes, but he is not likely to fall a victim to feminine charms again.

E. R. Kennen.

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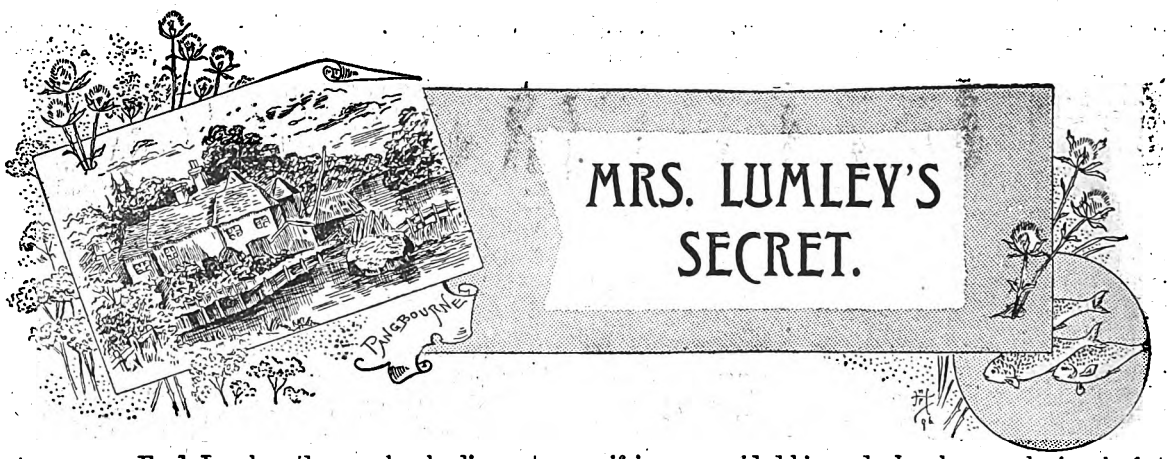

ALTHOUGH Fred Lumley, the popular leading actor of the "Kemble" Theatre, had been often heard to declare before marriage that there were men in the world who would marry the daughter of a Carribean savage providing she had £500 a year, he was not prepared to withdraw that statement even when Miss Emily Staples, the beautiful and accomplished niece of the wealthy Mr. Nicholas Staples, an enthusiastic patron of the drama, became his wife.

The young actor could safely affirm that his marriage had not been dictated by mercenary considerations, for although Mr. Staples, in giving his consent, had stipulated that he should be allowed to reside with the young couple on condition of his settling on his niece £500 a year, Fred, with that perception of character which seems peculiar to actors, would have declined his offer, had he not been afraid of losing Emily. He didn't like Mr. Staples, but he was very fond of Emily, so with a wry face he consented.

The lapse of five years left the young couple mutually satisfied with each other. Fred was ardently devoted to his profession, and as his services were much in request at matinées as well as at night, he and his wife did not often see much of each other, but they were always polite and affectionate when they did.

True, the fires lit by matrimony had nearly gone out, but the embers were glowing, showing that they had not yet arrived at that state when a stony embrace once a day is an indication that the domestic barometer is at fair. At the breakfast table Fred contemplated his wife's pretty face with a placid sense of pleasure, and when he left the house for rehearsals it was with the consciousness that the diadem of purity encircled her brow.

It was about this time that the actor's perceptive qualities—which, as we have said, were great—informed him that Uncle Nicholas had begun to eye him with a very mournful and sympathising expression, and, as Fred hated mysteries, he determined to have it out with the old gentleman, but all he could extract amounted to this: "Keep an eye on your wife, watch her, and if you think she is keeping anything from you, come to me. As my niece is the daughter of my dead brother, it behoves me to proceed in this matter with caution."

Fred pooh-poohed and pished a good deal during the delivery of this warning. It was not the first time Uncle Nicholas had been the cause of little "tiffs" between Emily and himself, but, try as he would, he found himself unable to resist following his advice. Slowly it dawned on him that Nicholas was right. His wife's eyes avoided his, and when he casually inquired at dinner one evening how she had spent the day, she stammered an inarticulate reply, and hastily left the room.

The next day, on returning from rehearsal, he happened to go into her boudoir without knocking. She was reading a letter. With cheeks aflame she tried to hide it. Fred saw nothing strange in her reading a letter, but why should a hot flush mantle her cheek as she declared the letter was from her sister? When Emily left the room her husband's eye lighted on an envelope in the grate, and he saw that it was addressed to his wife, and that the handwriting was that of a man, so he sought Nicholas again.

"I have come," he said. "My wife has a secret."

"I knew it," replied the old man with a malicious chuckle, which caused Fred to feel an inclination to strangle him. "It's a sad thing, a very sad thing."

"What's a very sad thing?" inquired the actor, a horrible fear gnawing his heart.

"Find out where your wife goes in the hansom cab which waits for her round the corner of the next street three and sometimes four times a week at 11.a.m."

Now, Fred did not think much of this; he was not naturally of a jealous disposition, and although he remembered the envelope he had found in the grate, there was no reason it should have any connection with journeys in a hansom cab at 11 a.m. Still, next morning, when his wife refused to accompany him to rehearsal, alleging as an excuse that her duties at home would occupy all the morning, he could not help peeping at her face over the top of the part he was studying. It gave him quite a shock.

He felt convinced she was deceiving him. So after pleading indisposition at rehearsal he hurried home, opened the door softly, slipped into his study unobserved and waited. A little later he heard a stealthy step descending the stairs, and opening the door slightly, saw his wife most elegantly dressed, quietly leaving the house.

The corner of the street was visible from the staircase window, but he found that occupied by the servants, who seemed as much interested in the doings of their mistress as Mr. Lumley was. The cook, who was a shocking example of the deteriorating effect of hard work on the female form, and whose stockings were not immaculate, was just confiding her opinions of married life to one of the housemaids, when she saw Mr. Lumley and fled, followed by the others, allowing their master to

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reach the window in time to see his wife step into a hansom and drive off. Before he left the window he was joined by Uncle Nicholas, who drew his attention to the alertness which characterised the neighbourhood that morning. There were heads at every window, and from the signalling, pointing, and smiling, it seemed as if the watchers had very definite views on the matter, if he hadn't. Where had his wife gone to in the hansom, and how dare she keep these journeys a secret from him? She was his wife. What did it all mean?

Mr. Lumley took advantage of his wife's absence to institute a minute search in her boudoir and dressing-room, and an icy terror crept into his heart when he saw his wretched old relation pounce on a letter hidden at the back of a drawer in the dressing-table. It was only a fragment, but it was in the same handwriting as the envelope he had found in the grate, and ran as follows:

"As my brother who is staying with me knows your husband, we must be very careful. I shall expect you to-morrow morning. Be at the side entrance at 11.30. I will be on the watch, and will let you in unobserved."

He read the letter again and again, and tried to imagine a case where a married lady found it necessary, for some good and praiseworthy object, to be smuggled into the house of a gentleman at 11 30 a.m. unknown to her husband. He tried but failed, and, leaden winged, the effort to believe her innocent fluttered to the ground.

That evening Mr. Lumley dined at his club, and for the first time in his life took too much wine. The most poignant griefs are apt to fade when contemplated through vinous and alcholic mists, but the next morning after he had asked his wife to meet him after rehearsal to go to the Royal Academy, and she had refused, saying she had "some shopping to do," he looked quite ten years older as he stepped into the cab which Uncle Nicholas had secured to follow Mrs. Lumley. Sorrow is an unsparing sculptor, and horrible suspicion will mar the smoothness of the noblest brow.

The features of the unhappy actor twitched with passion, and from the way he wriggled in his seat it seemed to his relative—who, never having been married himself, regarded his companion with a sort of "tired sneer"—that a veritable tempest of jealousy was rushing up and down him, north, south, east, and west. Uncle Nicholas had to endure something more than the proverbial "bad quarter of an hour" that morning.

"This is all your confounded work!" exclaimed the actor, turning on the old gentleman with a look appalling in its ferocity.

"My dear boy, the sacred instincts of truth would not permit me to remain silent."

"Indeed!" was the withering reply. "Not even to preserve the reputation of your niece?"

"Truth should be paramount to all consideration," said the old gentleman uneasily.

"The truth!" roared Fred, so loudly that it is a wonder his wife did not hear him. "The truth is only estimable when spoken in a righteous cause. If it is true that truth lies at the bottom of a well, I tell you to your face that I wish you had drowned yourself when you went down to seek it!"

Fred's spirits rose as the cab drove on. Her destination might be Regent Street and shopping after all. Yes, there was still a ray of hope, a thin, half-starved ray if you like, but the actor clung to it and basked and revelled in its meagre warmth, till the cab containing Emily left Regent Street and made straight for St. John's Wood, when he sank back on his seat with a low groan. When Emily's cab drew up at a small villa in Alpha Grove, Fred and his companion hurriedly alighted, and hiding behind their vehicle, watched the movements of the guilty woman. Looking furtively round, Mrs. Lumley drew down her veil, and cautiously approaching the side entrance, knocked.

A young gentleman presently opened the door, and motioning her to silence, drew her inside, closing it again. A young gentleman, and a handsome one, too. Who was the serpent who had crept into his paradise?

"Come away," whispered Nicholas, "depraved hussy!"

"Come away," cried Fred hoarsely, "when my wife is in that house with a man whose features, when he opened the door, anyone could see were distinctly affectionate? Come away? Never!" and shaking off his companion's grasp, he went up the steps, and giving a couple of loud knocks in imitation of a postman's summons soon found himself inside the house.

Slipping a sovereign into the astonished domestic's hand, he asked where the lady was who had just entered.

"What lady, sir?"

"Well, where's your master!"

"Upstairs, sir, in that room."

Accompanied by Uncle Nicholas Fred stole upstairs. They reached the door, stopped and listened. They heard voices. One was Emily's, the other a gentleman's.

"I think I shall have another try at your mouth, you closed it too firmly yesterday."

The airy gusto with which the gentleman announced this intention completely upset the actor's self-command. The next moment he was in the room, looking uncommonly foolish too, when he found that his wife was having her portrait painted by that rising young artist, Bucklaw, and that the work was being prepared in secret, as Emily intended the picture as a birthday surprise for her husband.

Fred seized a favourable opportunity that evening and replaced the letter which had so upset his peace of mind in the drawer of the dressing-table, and swore he would kick Uncle Nicholas out of the house if he breathed a word of what had taken place. Emily appeared perfectly satisfied with her husband's masterly explanation, that "he happened to be passing through Alpha Grove as Emily entered Bucklaw's studio," but for all that she discharged the cook the next day, and made matters so very uncomfortable for Uncle Nicholas that he soon left the house exclaiming with hardened jocosity:

"Emily, my presence in your husband's house, and the occasional domestic breezes I have caused, have given crisp ripples to the waters of your domestic life. I leave you now to the utter stagnation of contentment. Good-bye."

ARTHUR GOODRICH.

RESULT OF "BOOK" COMPETITION FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 16th.

Miss C. Hart, 21 King's Road, Brownswood Park, N. "Tennyson's Poems."

W. H. Procter, School Board Offices, Congleton. "The Zone of Fire." By Headon Hill.

Thomas Boddy, Heighington R.S.O., County Durham. "Exercise for Health."

G. Jones, 26 Yorkington Street, Stockport. "The Christian." By Hall Caine

Jack Hazeldene, Middle Class Schools, Sheffield. "Huxley's Physiology."

W. H. Westlake, 2 Rownham Place, Clifton, Bristol. "Strength." By Sandow.

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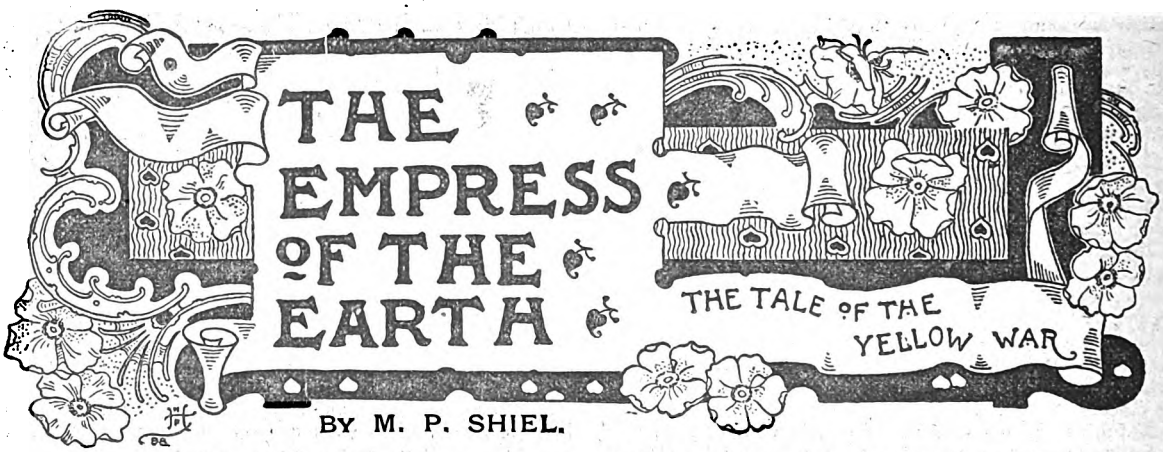

BY M. P. SHIEL.

CHAPTER XXV.

Before the Battle.

During all that afternoon and night England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland uttered its voice.

For on the 6th of August the usual 5,000,000 letters and post-cards delivered by the Post-office leapt up to 14,500,000. This meant that the whole nation had taken busily to pen-and-ink, to paper and card-board. It meant that it was profoundly stirred about something, that it wanted something with its whole heart.

All these extra millions of letters were directed to London, some to the Government offices, the majority to the London daily papers. Not a thousandth part of them were ever opened. The Circulation Office of the London Postal Service Department was kept in a flurry of business all through the night. St. Martin's in the morning got postmen where it could; and the bags of the carriers bulged.

When any vast collection of animals acts in this spontaneous way, all doing the same thing, it is that they are stirred by some instinct which is in unison with the Soul of the world. The Universal Voice is, in truth, the voice of God. Democracy is thus a kind of Holy Scripture. Its Will is the Decalogue.

The nation, having eagerly drunk the news that John Hardy had suddenly reappeared in England as mysteriously as he had disappeared from it, demanded his presence at the impending battle. It insisted that no nonsense about formality or convention should deprive it of his possible help. Most of the people demanded his appointment as Admiral of the Fleet.

And why? He had only been instrumental in winning a single battle for England. If they had reasoned, their ardour of persuasion could not have been so intense. But the fact is, that their cry proceeded only from that divine instinct for truth which, in hours of extremity, often inspires nations, and sometimes individuals. That Hardy was the right man, just then, just there, they felt intuitively; and they did not mince matters in proclaiming it.

The *Daily Mail* sent a telegram to Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, to ask his opinion. The reply was characteristic of the aged statesman. He wired:

"Am not specially qualified to judge, but agree *in the main* with the nation."

The only person in Europe to whom the coming battle, or his own possible share in it, did not seem of direct momentous importance, was Hardy.

For the immediate motive of the Allies in invading England was to compel the withdrawal of the British troops from the Continent; but even supposing they effected a landing, there was an enemy impending upon them, as Hardy knew, far more terrible than all the combined armies of several Europes; and this enemy would at once compel them to do the very thing they sought to force upon Britain.

And it was near—it was not far off. As he stepped into the train at Worthing that night for his journey to London, he bought a paper; and in a small-type paragraph, unmarked perhaps but by him, he saw this quaint item of news:

"A train containing 500 Chinese has arrived at Petersburg from Vladivostok. They seem poor, and the object of their journey is unknown. It is the intention of the Russian authorities to send them back to their own country."

Hardy muttered to himself:

"So soon, Yen How?"

But in the eyes of England, of Britain, of Europe, the coming battle was the Greater Waterloo of world-history; the final shock of this annihilating war; the crowning Armageddon before a probable thousand years of Peace.

If Britain failed now, she failed; and if Europe, then Europe failed, too. There could be little further struggle: for who would be there to make it? There would be no fight left in the limp nations.

Hardy reached London at eleven p.m. It was partly expecting him, for as soon as the two Worthing reporters had got off their news, Worthing had pricked its ears and heard. Dixon's became the centre of the town, and a moving crowd surveyed the house for hours. Long before Hardy appeared all his immediate plans were known from Dixon; he was then cheered by the full street; only those near enough to see him well being mostly silent, impressed with something of that strangeness of expression which made the sailors at Kiao-chau whisper: "What a face!"

London, therefore, expected him, without certainty as to the hour of his arrival. A considerable crowd waited at Victoria; but when at last it saw him, it made no sign. They looked for a very young man, with swift glance and free air. They saw a man with stooping shoulders and grey in his long hair; and decided that this was hardly he.

But one pair of eyes knew him under his disguise. Old Bobbie Mason had been waiting all the evening at the station, wondering why his boy had forgotten him, had sent him no line or word. When at last he saw, he started with horror; but he knew his own.

Outside, instead of the crowd of busy cabs, Hardy saw a meagre muster of five or six; and his musing eye noted the raw-boned look of the horses. As his carriage passed through Buckingham Palace Road, a baked-potato apparatus stood just in front of the Palace, and he noted with a pang the largeness of the crowd round it. The streets were almost deserted. Even the policemen seemed fewer. In a bye-street near Oxford Circus, an old woman walked

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and behind her a cat, with little halts and runs, followed persistently, sending out piteous feeble cries to the night.

Old Bobbie, sitting there by his side, waited for a caress of the once affectionate hand. But no caress came. They drove onward in absolute silence. The only words which John had spoken were the two: "Well, Bobbie," at the station-platform. The old man was frightened.

Once only, as John was moving off to bed, the old butler broke out; and he cried, with clasped hand:

"Master John—what—what—have they done to you!"

And John answered:

"They have tortured me to death, Bobbie, if you want to know."

And that was all. The rose-leaf lips were pressed pretty tight now.

Early in the morning the Government knew what it had to do, if it meant to keep its place. In a thousand startling ways it learnt that the nation's will, this time, had got to be done.

But the thing was officially impossible. John Hardy was nobody, officially. The ships' crews were complete; and it was anticipated that the main portion of the fleet still at anchor would sail at noon. The Government could not exactly telegraph to a Captain or a Vice-Admiral, and say: "You must give up your place to John Hardy, because he is a better man than you." They were absolutely at their wits' end.

But the chief characteristic of the British race is its nimble way. It actually does manage in the end. At nine o'clock Captain MacLeod, once of the *Jupiter*, now of the *Royal Sovereign*, was seized by "a sudden illness"; at half-past nine, Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, principal Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, was at 11A Cavendish Square; at ten, Lord Charles Beresford, upon whom, in the hour of peril, the supreme command had been imposed, telegraphed to the Committee of National Safety, and also to the Admiralty, offering to Hardy a joint command of the squadron: at half-past ten Hardy was hasting in a special train toward Portsmouth.

An old woman walked, and behind her a cat.

But he went under compulsion, not knowing why. He had no theory of naval war. He had, indeed, won a battle, but—he shrank a little from this prominence. The truth was, he was more or less unconscious of the clearness of his own eyes, and the valour of his own heart. It needed that the actual hard facts of a situation should be before him before he could assume the aggressiveness and the self-assurance of the hero.

When on the point of setting out from Cavendish Square, he had cut out from the newspaper bought at Worthing the paragraph about the 500 Chinese. And he had written the two following letters, the first to Mr. Goschen at his private address:

DEAR SIR,—I am just about to set out to fight in the battle which you kindly allow me to attend. In case I should get killed, I am writing this letter to ask you if you will kindly send a ship, flying the English White Ensign at her mast-head, under that the Blue Peter, and under that the Union Jack, to the island of Monte Christo, with orders to bring home what she will find there. I believe you will find that this will come in useful to you in a few weeks' time.

I am, sir,
Your obdt. servant,
JOHN HARDY.

The second letter was to Lord Salisbury. It ran:

MY LORD,—I take the liberty to inclose you a slip from a newspaper about some Chinamen who have come to Petersburg, because I believe it is well worth your attention. In my opinion, within three or four weeks from now there will be some four hundred millions of yellow men in Europe, and perhaps in England, too. I have just come from China myself, so I ought to know what I am saying. A very great man, named Yen How, is the cause of all this. In my opinion, the very best thing England could do would be to withdraw at once from the Continent the armies she has there.

I am, my Lord,
Your obdt. servant,
JOHN HARDY.

If ever man was shocked with fright, or started at the keen spur of terror, it was the Prime Minister on reading this note.

Now he understood some things which had puzzled him.

News had reached England that three American cruisers in Chinese waters had mysteriously ceased to report themselves. Later had come the news that no intelligence could be obtained of some Italian and Austrian ships of war sent out to China during the "Eastern craze." Merchant ships from Europe had sailed round the Cape to the far East, and their long-delayed return was still awaited. It was known that China and Europe were telegraphically disconnected.

These things, at another time, might have given to Europe some faint hint of the actual facts. But during the preoccupation of the war, not the remotest inkling of the truth occurred to anyone. China was a forgotten land. The result of the great naval battle in the Hwang-hai was still unknown in England—all was unknown. John Hardy was the first messenger from that silent, but busy Eastern world, who had appeared for many a month.

At the quay a boat awaited him. He was taken on board the *Anson*, which carried the Admiral's flag at the main, and was received by Lord Charles Beresford in his private cabin.

The cheery sailor took the hand of the grave-faced one, and said:

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"They have tortured me to death, Bobbie, if you want to know."

"I congratulate you most heartily, Mr. Hardy, on the merited enthusiasm and confidence which you have aroused in your countrymen, and I shall feel myself honoured by your collaboration."

And Hardy said:

"Thank you, my lord."

And, after some few words, they sat together, and Beresford said:

"The facts, since you are ignorant of them, are roughly these: The navy of Italy is practically intact. Of her twelve first-class battleships, two were sunk by Riviera forts, but about 130,000 tons of her 150,000 odd tons in this line remain, with say 44 guns over 13 inches, and counting the whole fleet, 16 over 10. With the names, tonnage, and armaments of the various ships you are doubtless familiar, the two lost ships being the *Re Umberto*, and the *Rugiero di Lauria*. France, on the other hand, has lost heavily in the war, her Toulon squadron of some eighteen armoured ships, which she had imprudently reduced by the four sent to take part in the first invasion of England, was practically annihilated in the Bay of Algesiras, during an attempt to pass through the Straits. A few antiquated wooden things like the *Colbert* and the *Suffren*, as well as that rather lame duck, the *Richelieu*, still remain.

"Her Levant squadron, however, is mostly good for fight; there was a brush with our East Mediterranean force, but the French turned tail, and were lost in a mist after some mutual injuries. The majority of the fifteen coast-defence iron-clads, moreover, are intact, and I have no doubt will be dragged into this final effort. Altogether we have, I think, to reckon with a contribution from France of, say, 96,000 tons, and this will include, I think I may say, the *Brennus*, the *Sfax*, the *Trident*, the two three-masted *contre-torpilleurs*, *Voutour* and *Cosmao*, the *Amiral Duperré*, the *Levrier*, the cruiser *Troude*, the *Marceau*, and the *Magenta*. Those, I think, are all I can be sure of. In the Baltic there have been four battles, one British-German, one British-Russian-German, one Swedish-German, and the last Swedish-Russian. On the state of affairs with regard to Baltic ships I am unfortunately not so well informed.

"I very much doubt if there remains to Sweden a single effective ship of war; but, if I am not wrong, we may expect to have to do with a contribution from Russia and Germany combined of say, 100,000 tons, one half of which, I calculate, will be battle-ship weight, and the rest cruisers and torpedo flotillas. Austria will send her single battle-ship and her 32,000 ton weight in cruisers, making altogether, with torpedo-boats, say 40,000 tons. Putting all these together, I have calculated, Mr. Hardy, an opposition of 456,000 tons.

"Very well, now. Let us turn nearer home, and see what force we have to oppose to this great armada. Britain, I assure you, has had a hard and up-hill fight of it. There lie around you ships recalled from every quarter of the globe, except China, where, I hear that you say, our squadron has gone to Davy Jones. If an invading army were to descend from, let us say, the planet Jupiter, they would find all our colonies undefended. Happily our enemies are in the same plight. Altogether we have at our command, including available coast-defence ships, 156,000 tons, just about one-third of the enemy's force; and if these figures do not fill you with a certain gravity, it is because you are a Briton and Mr. Hardy."

Beresford smiled as he concluded, leaning back in his chair; Hardy, looking upon the ground, did not smile.

After a minute Hardy said:

"I take it, my lord, that after this battle, there won't be any ships of war left anywhere?"

"There will be the Japanese, Chinese, and American navies," said Beresford, "and some things known as the *Marina Espagñola*, with some inconsiderable Portuguese and Dutch ships. Europe will then have to fight with her Atlantic greyhounds."

Still Hardy did not smile.

"And what are our best ships, my lord?" he said.

"Our best ships are good," replied Lord Charles Beresford. "We have the *Illustrious*, the *Hood*, the *Anson*, the *Trafalgar*, the *Royal Sovereign*, on board of which you will bear the joint direction of the battle, though I am sorry to say without a Flag Captain—also the *Centurion*, the *Nile*, the *Benbow*, the *Hero*. You will see in a few minutes for yourself. Not all the most modern of the modern, perhaps—but all good ships and true."

"There won't be much of them left after the battle, my lord," remarked Hardy.

This was obvious. Lord Beresford coughed. And he said:

"I suppose not. But now—the case being as I have explained to you, what are your ideas as to a plan of battle, and so on?"

For some time Hardy was silent, perusing the ground. Afterwards, he said:

"To be candid, my lord, I have no idea, not a single one. Or rather, I have *One*."

"Very good, Mr. Hardy; let me hear it, and we will then confer together upon it."

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"My idea is this, sir," said Hardy, "to ask you to let me take a cruiser, or a pinnace, and go to the foreign fleet with a flag of truce to try and persuade them, by hook or by crook, to go back again to their own country."

"My good Mr. Hardy!" broke from Lord Charles' lips.

"You are astonished, my lord," said Hardy. "You guess that I am as fond of a fight as anyone, and you did not quite expect to hear that sort of proposal from me. But I make it seriously to you, and in doing so, I forget my own inclination, and even I forget the glory of England. I am thinking of the good of the whole world. The fact is, sir, I happen to know more of the actual conditions of the present and the near future than you do, and therefore see things in different proportions. I say to you, Lord Beresford, that mankind is at this moment in by far the greatest fix in which it has ever been since the first man stepped; and how it is going to get out of it, God only knows. You think you have been having a great war in Europe, and so you have.

"But this little great war of yours is not anything compared with what is coming upon you, sir. Believe me, for I know, or I would not say it. It has been man warring with man all the time, has it not? But how if all the devils in Hades, myriads of them, my lord, suddenly break loose upon you?

"It would be an easy thing for four millions of yellow men, with a proper leader, to conquer Europe in its present state. But it is not four millions which are coming; it is four hundred millions; and every single one of them a devil, as I say, vomited from below. I have just come from China; and that is what I have to tell you, sir."

As Hardy ceased, he lifted his hitherto careless eyes, and now there was a flash in them; in the face of the other was horror, query, incredulity.

There was a dead silence. Lord Beresford had of old been himself one of the preachers of "The Yellow Danger;" but he had preached it as a theory, afar off. When he was told that it was here—had come — it shocked and appalled him as though he had never once heard of such a thing.

In the midst of the silence, there was a knock, and the Admiral's Flag-Lieutenant entered the room. He said:

"The *Indefatigable* has steamed into harbour, sir, and signals that the enemy are now passing through the Straits."

A chain of four British cruisers, going and coming within signalling distance of one another, the remotest keeping watch upon the movements of the enemy, the nearest in touch with Portsmouth, had been told off for this duty two days previously.

"We must be looking alive, then," said Lord Beresford. "The words you have spoken, Mr. Hardy, are terrible; and the course you suggest seems to me one almost requiring the authority of the civil powers. But now, you see, there is no time. I suppose I must take upon myself the responsibility of acceding to your views."

"I believe that England will approve our conduct, sir."

"Good. At the same time I can't say that I have much faith in the success of your expedition."

"I *hope* it will succeed, my lord. If it does not——"

"Well?"

"Then it will serve another end."

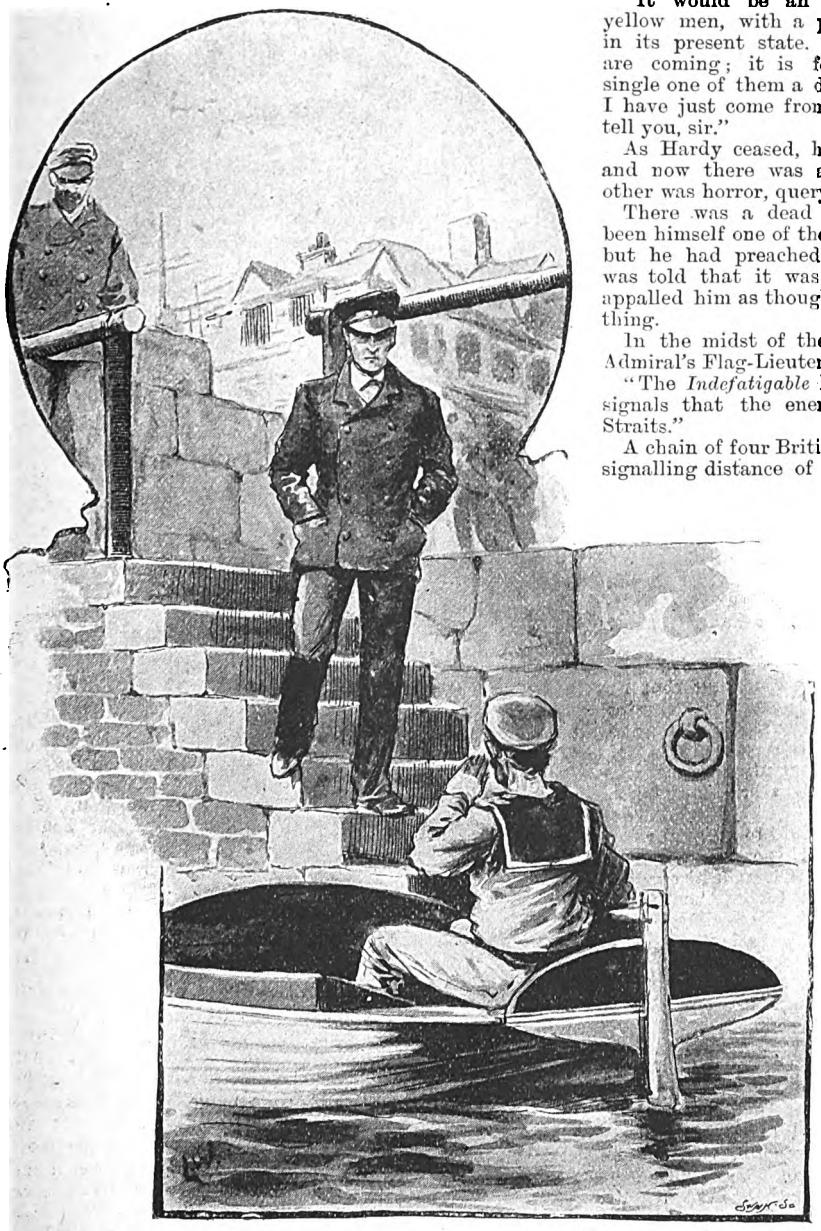
"What end?"

"I shall have a good look at the enemy's formation, forces, and disposition."

And at these words the eyes of the two men met.

And Lord Charles Beresford smiled.

And John Hardy, for the first time, smiled.



He was taken on board the Anson.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

The Greater Waterloo.

The ships lay in harbour with fires banked and steam at a quarter of an hour's notice.

The single signal "Weigh!" went up from the *Anson*, and ten thousand sailor-hearts went fluttering with awe as the fat chain-links, like processions of slow-footed sea-tortoises, came waddling clumsily in-board.

It was arranged between Hardy and Beresford that the plan of advance which the latter had long since determined upon should be put into execution and maintained, up to the time of Hardy's visit to the Allied fleet. If, after the visit, Hardy wished to take over the sole command, he would signal that fact throughout the fleet.

At noon exactly the ships steamed out. At once the news was flashed over all Britain, and an hour later the churches of the land, in village, town, and city, were thronged with worshippers, imploring the Almighty to protect His Witness in the earth, and not to forsake in the hour of her extremity that chosen Nation, His Servant, which had proclaimed the greatness of goodness, and, as far as her poor striving eyes could see, had loved Righteousness, and had hated Iniquity.

The ships passed Spithead massed in four columns in line ahead, flag and senior officers leading their columns, Hardy at the head of the starboard line in the *Royal Sovereign*, and Beresford at the head of the extreme port. Ships had stringent instructions to keep their speed, and maintain an exact formation. Six knots, eight knots, ten knots were signalled; and it was evident from the position of the steam cones that every ship had steam in plenty.

It was a bright early September day; but as often happens on such days, a bluish mist, which was half a mist, and half a luminosity, delicately veiled the distance.

Off Selsey Bill the second link of the chain of look-outs joined the fleet, an hour afterwards the third, and half an hour afterwards the fourth. The last, having come in at the rate of twenty-one knots, reported the enemy off Winchelsea, steering W. by S. in four lines abreast, the last line consisting mainly of troopships, and the whole occupying a vast breadth of sea midway between the French coast at Dieppe and the English at Winchelsea. In half-an-hour everybody of any rank in either fleet had a glass at his eyes.

It was the head signalman of the *Royal Sovereign* who first sent a thrill through his ship by reporting that he could make out something to eastward; and five minutes later every glass could detect the enemy, faint and toy-like in the vague haze as mirage, or the other-world hues of soap-bubbles. The fleets were then twenty miles apart, and it was just after four, the day being as bright and hot as ever.

John Hardy, the glass at his eyes, said to a signal midshipman, an old *Britannia* ship-mate of his own age:

"I want No. 98. Have her signalled alongside at once."

No. 98 was a quite new first-class torpedo-boat, the fastest thing in the British navy, and the first of her build. Only 130 tons in displacement, she yet had a length of 160 feet, and an I.H.P. of 2,800. She steamed, or rushed, at the rate of 27 knots, and while she was doing it, her crew were not comfortable, and the sea in all her neighbourhood changed colour. John Hardy, before he stepped aboard her, took the precaution to drape himself from head to foot in oil-skins.

Away, then, in a few minutes, drove No. 98 at full speed, swaying in a horrible vibratory heave of her flanks, like a charger who has galloped all day, and at night-fall he sprawls with drooped neck at the inn-gate, the sweat reeking on his rocking ribs; so drove No. 98, groaning for speed, seeming far too frail for the power that pumped and travailed within her rocking ribs.

Eastward she flew, a mere white spectre of hurrying foam; and within this shroud of spray, Hardy in his oilskins lay flat on his face, his left arm round an upright at the extreme bow, a double spy-glass at his eyes. From the mast-head amidships floated a large white flag.

As soon as No. 98 was seen to shoot ahead of the fleet, Lord Beresford signalled slow speed, and the fleet proceeded at a mere crawl through the water, this having been previously agreed upon. It was Hardy's idea that the enemy were probably ignorant of our exact forces, and that something might possibly be gained, when the facts of the battle unfolded themselves, by keeping them in this ignorance as long as might be. Hence a nearer approach was for the present avoided.

In thirty-five minutes Hardy was on the deck of the Allied Admiral's ship, the ship being the *Andrea Doria*, and the Admiral, in virtue of seniority, Admiral Prémesnil, the Grand Duke Alexis being second in command.

He was led, his face half enveloped in the throat-flap of the oil-skin, and the water streaming to his feet, into the Admiral's quarters. Prémesnil, a tall man, with grey hair, and a stately courteousness of manner, sat opposite to Hardy, supporting a thoughtful brow on thumb and finger.

"May I ask, sir," said Hardy, "are you fairly well acquainted with English?"

"Fairly well, sir," answered Prémesnil; "and that is not a confession, but a boast."

He bowed. Hardy bowed.

"Well, sir," said Hardy, "I come to you to make a proposal of peace. But before I can say anything, I must ask you to slacken your speed, so as not to approach too near to my fleet during our talk. Our fleet is almost stationary. I ask the same of you."

"It shall be done, sir. But first let us understand who we are. I, as you guess, am the Admiral-in-Chief here Admiral Prémesnil. Who are you?"

"I have the joint-command of the British fleet," said Hardy, "in collaboration with Lord Charles Beresford. My name is John Hardy. I speak for myself and my colleague."

"Might I ask—Hardy of Shoreham fame?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Then I shall at once comply with your request as to speed, and order you a glass of wine. You have had a good drenching, I see."

The Admiral touched a button, and gave an order to an officer as to speed. But Hardy declined the wine.

He put his brow on his hand, and he began to talk slowly and gravely in his plain, strong Saxon, unfolding to the Admiral why he was there, going into the minutiæ of the Chinese character, prophesying in simple English, but with the conviction and effusion of a Hebrew Seer, the doom of Europe.

He spoke for half-an-hour without interruption. And when he was finished, the Admiral sighed, for he was weary, and he was wondering what all this was about, and when it would end. He did not believe a word of the matter.

The thought occurred to him: "Can this be a ruse to keep back the battle till darkness comes on?"

His manner stiffened. He was hopelessly narrow and technical; he lacked both sight and insight.

"And what are your proposals, sir?" he said.

"I have made them!" said Hardy.

"But not seriously—come now."

Hardy leapt to his feet, flushing.

"Do you reject them, then?"

"In my own name, and in the name of my colleagues, without consulting them, most decidedly—yes."

"Then, sir, we will fight you."

"Since nothing else remains, Mr. Hardy."

"I say you *bonjour*, monsieur."

"Good day, Mr. Hardy."

They bowed. Hardy passed through the door, his brow very pink, the Admiral following.

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Again they bowed as Hardy passed down the ship's side; and never met again.

Back tore No. 98 to her own fleet, Hardy lying at her stern with the glass held steadily to his musing eyes.

To the surprise of the fleet, the torpedo-boat, instead of returning to the starboard column, made for the extreme port, steering for the *Anson*.

At this time Hardy, stung by the French Admiral, and excited at the near approach of battle, was flushed in face, and about him was something of his natural look of youth. His blood was up. He had come into contact with the realities of the case—the very realities to which his own inner nature was akin. Here he was at home, among familiar things, which he could manipulate without fail. His nature, as it were, rose and buckled on its sword, feeling

His face half enveloped in the throat-flap of the oilskin.

its force, not doubting its dowry. He was prepared now for any responsibility. His soul recognised and acknowledged itself, and his eyes were bright. He was a Hero.

As other men discover theories and apply them to facts, so he, on contact with facts, evolved theories. He had formed a plan of the battle.

He ran up to the *Anson's* side with alacrity. And as he was hurriedly met by Lord Beresford, he hurriedly said:

"These people will have nothing to do with peace, my lord. The thing now is to beat them."

"I heartily agree, Mr. Hardy. Am I to understand that, having seen their disposition, you are prepared to take over the sole command?"

"I am willing, my lord."

"Good! And have you come to tell me that?"

"No. I came to save you a journey to my ship, as I was already abroad from mine. What I want is a meeting of all captains and commanders in your ward-room at once. But it must be at once."

Beresford instantly turned, and sent a middy packing with the order; the flags climbed up, and a flotilla of forty-three hurried boats came converging over a wide space of sea.

They were soon all on board, and gathered in the ward-room. Beresford, half-rising from his chair, said: "Mr. Hardy will speak on my behalf and on his own, gentlemen," and sat down again.

Every one of those assembled eyes rested critically upon Hardy as he rose, he in his wet oil-skins, they all in uniform, prepared to pass judgment upon him as seaman, as general, as man.

Would he not hesitate, or blush, or strut, or stammer? Would he not show himself blatant, or timorous, or crude, or uninitiated?

They none of them felt absolutely sure of him. Only Hardy felt absolutely sure of himself, standing on fact. He rose with the self-assurance and the self-unconsciousness of Cromwell, four-square to his place and his hour.

This is what he said:

"We have not much time for talk, gentlemen, as the enemy must now be approaching us at the rate of eight or ten knots, and I do not want them to come too near before I tell you what I think. Lord Charles Beresford has calculated that they outnumber us by three to one, and that is just about the truth. Now, I am not at all sure that you will all absolutely agree with what I am going to say about that; but, personally, I am quite certain of my ground. They are three, I say, and we are one. Well, suppose three men attack me in the street, what would be the best thing, and what would be the worst, which I could do? The best thing I could do would be to set my back against a wall, face them, and try to drive away at them; the worst thing, would be to get in the middle of a triangle formed by them. We agree, of course, as to that; and hence the horror which all military people have of the phrase: 'between two fires.'

"But surely, gentlemen, with a ship it is different! On land you must not be too bold, for then you become rash; but on board a ship, I give it as my opinion, that the rasher you are, the better the chance you have! *Why*, let me ask you, ought I to try to get my back against a wall, if three men attack me in the street? There is no other reason than this: that I have only got one face and two hands. If I had three faces, and six hands, the best thing I could do would be to get in the middle of them, and try to finish them all off, before any two could attack me in one quarter.

"Now, a ship has four faces—a bow, a stern, and two sides—and under each of these a gallant number of hands. I believe now, whatever the books on naval tactics may say, that you will be on my side in this matter, for one, of course, must not go by books, where so much is at stake.

"But I do wish to convince you quite fully. Let me point out to you, then, that the modern battle-ship, as distinct from the old-time ones, is a far more potent thing as an attacking than as a self-defensive machine. The *Camperdown* rammed the *Victoria* as they were playing about together, and down, with hardly a sigh, went the *Victoria*, like lead. If you were to armour a battle-ship to resist the attack of a 111-ton gun, that ship would sink without troubling anyone to fire the gun off. And what does this prove? It proves that if three ships attack one, the best thing which that one can do is to to turn three faces simultaneously to those three ships, and batter away at them with her hundred hands, making sure that, not one, but four, ships will have disappeared when the smoke clears. In other words, the one ship must get in the middle of the three. It is a question of Time.

"Of course, gentlemen, if a ship could float with only one side, then it would be of great importance for her to avoid getting 'between two fires.' But when one side is broken,

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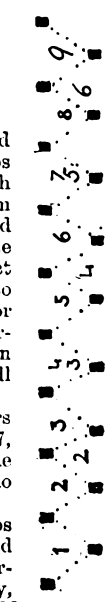
both sides sink, and it is of no consequence whether or not the other side is broken, too; while it *is* of consequence that that other side should, before it sinks, be sinking an enemy's ship. It is a question of Time.

"I hope I make myself clear. I am led to express these thoughts to you, because they have just been passing most vividly through my own head; and they have been doing so in consequence of the sight I have had of the enemy's fleet.

"The arrangement of that fleet you already partly know. The important point is this: that their first and second lines abreast consist of two rows of battle-ships, the first numbering ten, and the second nine. Now these are arranged in echelon; so that you get a series of nine triangles with their bases toward us, and their apex away from us, as you see in this drawing which I have made, marking the names of ships as far as I could determine, or guess them."

A paper roughly marked with a diagram like the following was handed round:

"Now, gentlemen, since we have just nine battle-ships, we have it in our power to make a dash into these nine triangles, and fire away; but in that case, every second Allied battle-ship in the front line would be attacked by two, instead of one British ship; and we really have not the material to spare for these luxuries. No: what I propose is that we spread ourselves out, so that six of our battle-ships shall occupy the whole length of the French line abreast; and in that case, as the diagram shows us, our extreme starboard ship will find herself running into a foreign triangle, base facing; our second ship into a quite distinct foreign triangle, apex facing; our third ship into a third foreign triangle, base facing; and so, for the six ships, base facing, and apex facing, alternately. Thus our six ships will engage eighteen distinct foreign ships; and the foreigners will have one ship left; and we shall have—three.



"Now, that one left ship of the foreigners I wish to have attacked by torpedo-boats No. 47, No. 53, and No. 98 at the same moment, the instant the battle commences. They are to do nothing else till that one ship is in the air.

"Well, with regard to our three battle-ships left, it is chiefly to tell you what I think should be done with them that I have called this hurried meeting. Gentlemen, it seems to me, really, that a perfectly whole and sound ship, suddenly and unexpectedly entering a battle when it is more than half over, must be not only a tremendous weapon in herself, but must necessarily be the cause of a tremendous demoralization in the minds of her enemies. Hence it is that I grudge the time taken up by every word that I am now speaking.

"The enemy is not quite certain of our numbers—they do not know that we have these three ships. I therefore want these three, at once, to retreat westward under forced draught till they see the smoke of the battle, and then, making a detour, to get behind the enemy's troopships, and dash among them from the east. I have very good reasons for knowing that, this time, it is not a matter of supreme national importance whether the foreigners land upon English soil, or not; but still, we do not want the people of Britain to be saying that they had a fleet, and it was not good enough to clear the seas of foreigners. The three ships will therefore worry among the troopships, sinking all they can—on this clear understanding, that they be not careful to destroy straggling ships, that they waste little time, that they dash as soon as may be into the general battle, and finish the destruction of the enemy.

"The three ships which I tell off for this duty are the *Centurion*, the *Benbow*, and the *Hero*.

"With regard to the method to be adopted by the Six, the three which enter a triangle-base will, after as much fight as possible without lowering speed in the middle, pass through and ram the apex; then if possible, and if need be, reform, return, and fight. The three which enter their triangles by an apex, will ram the apex, enter, and fight.

"One of the greatest horrors of modern sea-battles I believe to be the danger we are all in of doing injury to our own ships. But this time we shall be so spread out, that nothing of that sort is likely to happen—to battle-ships at least. But to captains and commanders of cruisers and composite vessels I recommend that reflection. For they, passing into the third line of the enemy, will have a thicker fight, which, I hope, will be conducted on the same principles as those I have enunciated for battle-ships.

"That is all I had to say, and now we must look sharp, I think, especially those Three. I wish you success and good-bye. After all, ships are dead things; it is not ships that fight a battle, but men; and everyone knows that we have the right men. Nice steering, dash, and plenty of quick thunder: that, I think, is much. We ought to be able to destroy this foreign fleet. I have seen their Admiral-in-chief, gentlemen, and he certainly did not look to me as if he knew much about ships and fighting."

A noise of laughter ran round the room. Already the magic of Hardy's plain, but dashing and fascinating personality, had caught and won his colleagues. It was impossible not to see, by the faces around him, that he was approved. He possessed the faculty of making men work with enthusiasm for him.

"What about the battle-word?" said a captain, as they turned to troop away.

"Suppose we say *Trafalgar?*" said Hardy.

"*Trafalgar* has been already used three times during the war," said Lord Beresford. "I had decided upon another, Mr. Hardy."

"What, my lord?"

"*Shoreham*," answered Lord Beresford.

And a murmur of "hear, hear," as the officers busily shook hands, spread half-way up the stairway; and Jack, a short while afterwards, knowing who now led him, received the signalled word with high enthusiasm.

(To be continued.)

WAR BETWEEN SPAIN AND AMERICA!

Now that hostilities between these two nations have at last broken out, you should at once secure a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* dated May 7th, which contains not only a brilliant illustrated article, showing the relative military and commercial strength of the two countries, but the first instalment of a powerful serial story, entitled:

"CONTRABAND OF WAR."

By M. P. SHIEL.

The scene of this story is laid chiefly round about the identical places where the fighting at the present moment is going on. A more up-to-date and thoroughly crisp, sparkling serial story is yet to be written.

***PEARSON'S WEEKLY* costs One Penny, And is published every Saturday.**

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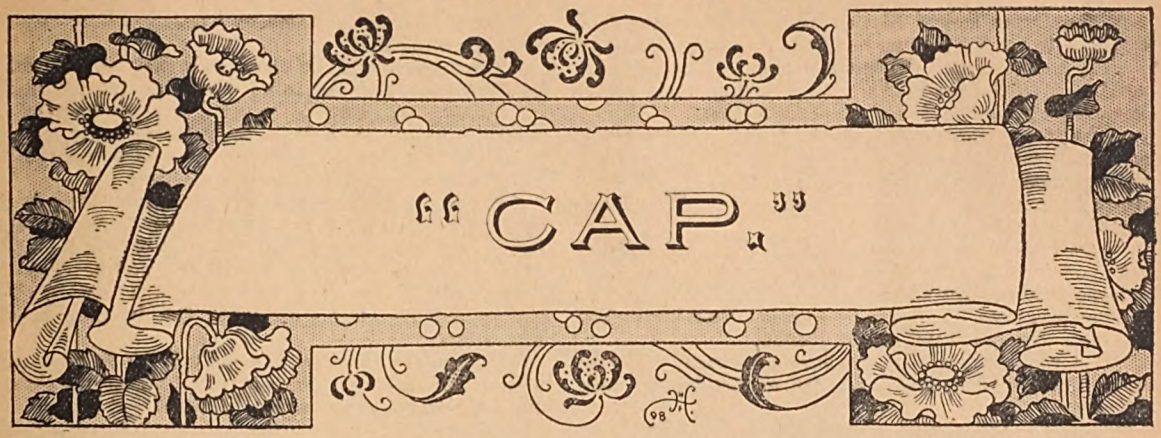

"CAP."

"That reminds me of an incident that occurred while I was out in Australia," said uncle Dick. "Did I ever tell you how Captola won her husband? No? Well, I'll tell you now.

"It was an early September morning in the late sixties. The summer rains had made vegetation rank, and the long grass was then thickly matted brown and dry as powder.

"I had been given orders for branding a herd of steers, and as I came to the porch I discovered Cap in her dingy old riding habit, sitting on the edge swinging her feet, her pony browsing just in front of her, and beside her was Henry, the owner of the big 'Home' ranch and her affianced lover. He was earnestly begging the girl to comply with some request.

"'Please, Cappie, yield to me this time.'

"'But I want the gloves and whip.'

"'I'll buy you a gross of silver-mounted whips and a dozen pairs of Jouvin's best—import them especially for the purpose—if you will give up riding at the fair.'

"'That would be a circumstance, wouldn't it?' flashed Captola. 'I could shake them under Miss Oates' nose and say, "There! just see what I got for letting you win the prize." No, Hal, it isn't the gloves or the whip, but a mean little ambition I want to gratify. That woman called me a hoyden, an uncultivated little heathen, and said I couldn't ride a bit. I don't mind the hoyden and heathen. I suppose I am both; but I can ride, and mean to do it.'

"'Little girl, you hurt me when you talk so thoughtlessly.'

"'And you hurt me cruelly,' she cried passionately, as she turned her flashing eyes upon him. 'I am ashamed to acknowledge how much. I fancied you loved me, but you don't. When you see me beside your mother and your incomparable sisters, and—and that horrid prim Miss Oates, you get ashamed of me, and want to bring me to the level of your social world; but you can't do it. I should die under the cultivating process. So you—I think—you can have your ring back,' and with a little sob Captola began to tug at her ring, but Henry caught her hands.

"'My dear little wild bird, I love you. I am years older than you, but I never said that to a woman till I met you. I am graver and quieter than you are, but I like your sunny nature, your winning ways. My mother and sisters do not know you as I do, and they want me to marry Miss Oates. They are looking for flaws in my gem, and I don't want them to have a chance to think they have found one. It is such a trifle I have asked you. Your father is away; there is no one to attend you, as you utterly refuse my escort unless I desert my mother and the other ladies, which I cannot do.'

"Henry paused.

"'No,' Cap replied angrily, as she jerked her hands away. 'They may take me as I am or not at all. If mamma had lived I might have been different, but I've only had dad, and he likes me best as I am. I never would have thought of riding at the fair, only when we were all out on horseback riding one night after Miss Oates first came, she said, purposely for me to hear, that "sticking on" was not good riding by any means, and made fun of my "old-fashioned" riding habit.' And Cap's tears splashed down on the dingy black calico.

"'You are much prettier in it than Miss Oates is in hers,' returned Henry warmly.

"'Oh, yes!' said Cap mockingly, 'much prettier; but you don't want to see me match my skill against her grace; but I will; and I will win the whip and gloves, so now!'

"'Then we will discuss the matter no further.'

"'Adieu, then, sir, until this afternoon, and remember,' she called, as she vaulted on Bret's back and turned to go, 'after to-day, I mean to show that dad has as much money as anybody. I don't care for dress, but if you do you shall be pleased,' and with a saucy kiss from her finger tips she rode away.

"Miss Oates and some of the city girls were going to ride for the prize, properly chaperoned, of course, and Captola had suddenly decided that she would ride too. The rules for entry required saddles, a piece of harness Cap scorned, and, besides her riding alone, Henry feared that she would be defeated by Miss Oates, who was extremely graceful in the saddle, and he knew that would nearly break Cap's heart. He was not aware that Cap had a thoroughbred Australian mare of her father's in training, and a saddle, or that she had added to her wardrobe an almost conventional habit. Captola was so nearly perfect that I verily believe she could have ridden on that saddle standing on her head."

Uncle Dick stopped to chuckle quietly at the remembrance.

"When afternoon came the fair grounds were crowded. I was there, and watched for Captola. Suddenly a little buzz of comment called the attention of all as Captola rode up unattended.

"She was a beauty. Her slender black mare was full of go, and impatient to be off. Cap was as slim and willowy as a cottonwood sapling in her close-fitting black velvet habit. She had put up all her curls under a little black velvet hat, round which was a long ostrich plume.

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"Miss Oates looked like a thundercloud. She had expected to see the girl on her little mustang and in the old black calico habit she usually wore. Henry smiled, and went to her instantly with a loving word, and I knew the clouds had disappeared for a time.

"The tournament began; up and down, round this way and back that, under the coppery sky the ladies rode, then paused. The judges were undecided, so they went through their paces again. No decision. The ladies would please change horses.

"Cap was off Rondo in an instant, but many of the ladies demurred. Miss Oates positively refused to mount anything but her own thoroughbred trained animal. The contest narrowed to Cap and two other bush-bred girls, but even they dared not mount Rondo.

"Cap rode each of the six horses in turn. As she changed the seventh and last time to Rondo, she rode up to me.

"'Uncle'—she always called me uncle—'don't you smell the bush fire?' she asked uneasily.

"'Yes; but it's across the creek. It can't reach us,' I replied.

"'I was thinking of the school-house,' she replied hurriedly, as the judges called. 'School began in Henry's district yesterday, and his sister let her little daughter go with Rose Williams to-day.' And then she rode into the ring.

"I looked at my watch—half-past three—then over to the north. The smoke was rolling up black and thick. I could see an eating line of red; the air was dense and heavy with the smell of burnt grass. If the wind should rise—just then a puff lifted my hat—yes, the schoolhouse was in great danger if the wind veered a point or two.

"I heard a shout of pleasure, and turned to see the judge hand a silver-mounted whip to Cap. She turned her head to look at me, and beyond me she saw the clouds of smoke. She brought the whip down on the flanks of the mare, and, quivering with fright, Rondo reached me in two leaps.

"'The Gill schoolhouse!' gasped Cap, pointing with her whip.

"Up to that moment the bush fire, so common a thing, had not been noticed. In a moment all was confusion. Miss Oates screamed, Mrs. Merriam, Henry's sister, fainted, and his mother turned white. In an instant Henry was out of the buggy with his hands upon Rondo's neck.

"'May I take her, Cappie? Nellie is over there.'

"Cap slid down. The saddle was flung off, and cutting the mare with the silver-mounted whip which Cap thrust into his hand, Henry was off, followed by half a dozen mounted men.

"Just then Cap heard a whinney, and a cold nose was thrust against her face. With a scream of joy, she threw her arms about Bret's neck! Her faithful little pony had broken its hobbles, and followed its mistress. Catching the trailing rope, Cap tied it bridle-fashion in the halter; then slipping out of her velvet riding skirt, and tearing off her gloves, she said to me as she jumped on Bret:

"'I know a short cut below the ford; perhaps I can help,' and was off.

"I followed in the buggy. Cap reached the school-house. The fire-guards were forty feet wide, and the teacher and his pupils had burnt the grass about the building, and felt safe in the school-house. The teacher said he would not let the children go till all danger was passed.

"'She cried to go home, so I permitted her to do so about three o'clock.'

"The teacher told me afterwards that he thought he had been struck by lightning when Cap got her breath.

"'Idiot!' she blazed, 'to let a little town-bred six-year-old child go half a mile through the bush by herself. Why, she isn't tall enough to see over the blue stem in the grass;' and she dashed away.

"At the ranch only the frightened housekeeper appeared. Nellie had not come! Cap rushed into the house and seized a handful of matches and a blanket from a pile that was airing in the porch. This she dipped into the watering trough as she flew by; then she jumped on Bret again, with the dripping blanket before her.

"'The little mischief has gone down in that gully where we found the rabbit's nest, and if the wind changes one atom to the north-west we are doomed,' was her one thought as she dug her heels into Bret's steaming sides.

"Sure enough, as she neared the bank of the gully, she saw a head of dark curls, and a little girl clambering and crying up the steep banks. Cap slid to the ground, and gathered the frightened waif in her arms. It was too late to ride from the fire! With all the strength left her she struck Bret a stinging blow.

"'Go home, if you can,' she cried, and the snorting animal fled before the flames, now hot upon them.

"Cap struck matches, and threw them into the ravine. The fire leapt up and ran over the bank towards the creek. Down over the hot embers, hands and feet blistering, and the child in her arms screaming with pain, Cap crept, dragging the wet blanket with her. The oncoming flames swept to the edge of the gully, and hungrily licked up the bits of dry grass left. They singed Cap's hair and scorched her face. She could barely keep the frantic child under the blanket, and could not save herself.

"The roar and crackle died away towards the creek, the air cooled a little, and then came unconsciousness.

"Just at dusk we found them. The men had all taken the bridge road, two miles round, but Bret and Cap had gone right down over the rocky hill and across the stream, dangerous to ford at the proper place, doubly dangerous there; but they had dared and won.

"Henry and his men rode right into the jaws of death in the blue stem along the creek, and had to retreat till the flames had exhausted themselves at the water's edge.

"We found Bret first. He had stumbled in a dog hole, broken his leg, and died in the fire. After a search of four awful hours we found Cap. Through the gathering gloom the crying of the child guided us to her. The wet blanket had saved Nellie, but poor Cap was nearly dead. She had lost all her yellow curls. Her face was blistered, and her eyes swollen and shut.

"She was wandering a little in her mind, and when Henry gathered her up in his arms she put her blistered little hands about his neck, and said sorrowfully:

"'If I'd only had a mother perhaps I should be different.'

"'Thank God you are your dear, loving little self,' Henry replied, with grave tenderness, as he drew her disfigured face close to his loving heart.'

"It was a baptism of fire, but it burnt lots of dross out of several natures, and blazed a safe and sure path for two of the best people I ever knew.

"Yes," concluded Uncle Dick, "I shall always insist that 'knowing how to gallop' was in this instance a very desirable accomplishment, even if not according to the 'English method.'"

GERALD BLAKE.

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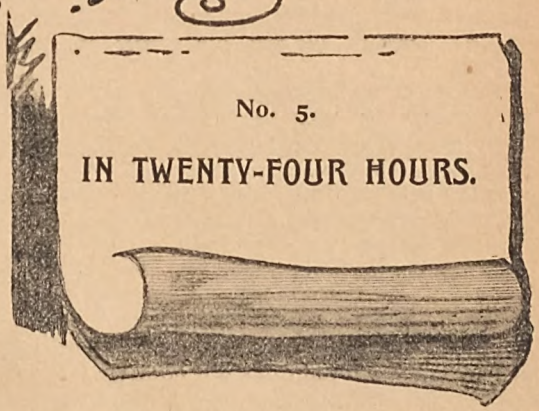
STORIES OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

UNEARTHED AND RE-EDITED BY ROBERT MACHRAY.



HENRY FARMER took a last look over a sheet of figures which he held in his shaking hand; the deep lines about his eyes and the trembling lips showed the unmistakable signs of some cruel mental strain he was undergoing—his whole attitude, indeed, was one of deep dejection.

Opposite him stood his clerk, who, by his air of gloom, mirrored back, as it were, only too faithfully the wretchedness of his master.

"Do you see any way, John?" Farmer asked for the hundredth time. "Do you see any way? But there is no way," and the words sounded like the moan of one dying, so hopeless, so despairing were the speaker's accents.

"No, sir—there is no way," echoed the clerk.

A half memory of some phrase about the bitterness of death came into Farmer's mind. He felt that the bitterness of living, so far as his present position was concerned, was infinitely worse.

"I wish I were dead," he said, uttering what was in his mind.

"I would not give way, sir," said his servant. "Why, the man who is on top to-day will be at the bottom to-morrow, and the man who was at the bottom yesterday is on the top to-day. I feel sure that you will master your difficulties before long."

"I have no such hopes," responded Farmer; "and in any case, as you know quite well, there is no possibility of my meeting my engagement to-morrow. There is no escape from the posting of my name to-morrow morning on the blackboard of the Stock Exchange as a defaulter."

The clerk only sighed. What his master said was true. During the past two weeks he had been well aware that nothing short of a miracle would save his master's credit. No miracle had happened, and the worst was come.

In those days when the whole of Europe was once more plunged into the horrors of war by Napoleon, the prices of all securities dealt in on 'Change varied very considerably, and there was always a chance, and something more than a chance even, for a daring swimmer in these troubled waters to make some great haul.

But where others had succeeded, Farmer had failed. When he had become a member of the Stock Exchange he was possessed of a considerable fortune, which he had inherited from his father. Through one mischance or another, he had managed to lose every penny of it, so that now his ruin was complete.

For him it had been one long losing game, with but few breaks of good luck. One melancholy satisfaction, however, was his, and that was that he had fought the game all through with honesty and courage. He had played it squarely, like a man. This had brought him not a few friends, to whom if he had gone earlier he might have applied for assistance and received it. A sort of stubborn pride had prevented him from doing so.

It had been a sweltering hot day in June—the 20th of June, in that great year of this century, 1815, to be exact. It was now late in the afternoon, and the streets in the neighbourhood of the Stock Exchange were deserted, partly owing to the hour and partly to the oppressive sultriness of the air. Most of the brokers and dealers had gone to their homes in the suburbs, or out of town altogether. It was too late to look for help, even if he had wished to do so.

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Once more Farmer went over the list of figures, looking and longing for some loop-hole of escape, but prospect of deliverance was there none. He could even see now quite clearly in his mind his name chalked up on the blackboard, the gibbet of the Stock Exchange.

What made his case more poignant was that about a month before this fatal time he had become the accepted lover of a young lady whom he regarded as the most beautiful and accomplished in the world. She was infinitely dear to him, and he believed with all his soul that she regarded him as infinitely dear to her.

Those who knew the young lady to whom Farmer was betrothed were more than half disposed to agree with him in his rapturous estimate of her charms. They contented themselves, however, by usually saying that she was a pretty creature, and a dear, and a sweet little soul, and so forth. As to what her character really was beneath her airs and graces, no one had any idea.

Nothing so far had occurred in the life of Miss Charlotte Dunbar, who was Farmer's sweetheart, to show whether she had any character at all. Now she was to be suddenly subjected to a cruel test.

Farmer was expected that night at the house of Alderman Dunbar, Charlotte's father, out at Kew. As a man of honour, he felt it was necessary that he should tell her the sorry plight in which he was, and break off the engagement between them at once. At first he thought he would send a letter. Then he told himself this would be cowardly, but in reality the face of the girl he loved came up before him with such an irresistible appeal, that he determined he must see her again, even if it were for the last time, and no matter at what cost to his own feelings.

When he reached the Alderman's mansion, he made his way in the warm dusk of the evening to a certain garden house in the grounds, where he had every reason to expect he would find his lady-love. She was waiting for him there—had been waiting for him some little time, and, though she greeted him with smiles of welcome, there was some hint of reproach upon her face.

Farmer's manner was so embarrassed, so troubled, that she knew at once that there was something seriously wrong with him.

"What is it, Henry?" she immediately asked, and placing her hand in his, seated him beside herself on the bench within the rustic arbour. "Tell me everything, I beg of you."

Henry Farmer had thought a good deal as he had driven along the road, of what he should say. His great anxiety was to spare her as much as possible, and he had framed a story which he hoped would gradually lead up without any harsh shock to the necessity that existed in his unfortunate position for the breaking off of their engagement. But at sight of her all his cunningly devised tale passed from his mind.

His agitation became extreme. After a piteous pause—and he felt the warm pressure of her hand on his through every fibre of his being, he said slowly and painfully:

"I should not have come. I had meant to be brave, and to prepare you as gently as I could for what I have to tell you. But I am not so strong as I thought I was. I have had much to try me lately."

"What is it, Henry? Tell me at once."

"I am ruined," he said desperately. "We must part, dear."

"Henry," was all she said, and now both hands clasped his.

There was a minute or two of silence, and then she said: "Tell me all about it."

Then he explained to her in a clear and simple fashion, so that she could thoroughly understand how he stood, that he had been unsuccessful in his speculations on the Stock Exchange, and that his fortune had been gradually dissipated by the various transactions he had been involved in.

The story, as a general thing, of a man's doings in that great centre of gambling, is not one that can be called romantic, or even very interesting, except to the person or persons most concerned in it. It is hardly one which is likely to fascinate a young girl, whose thoughts are naturally of pleasure and of all the brightness associated with the springtide of life.

Had it been anybody else's story but Henry Farmer's, Charlotte would have given it but scant attention; but as it was her lover's, she listened quite eagerly, helping him by a question here, or a sympathetic murmur there, as he proceeded with his tale.

"So you see, dear," concluded Farmer, who had grown much calmer as he went on with his narrative, "there is nothing for it but that we must part. I have no future to offer you. I am a defeated man, and you are made for success."

"Defeated, but not conquered, Henry, surely," said she, with unexpected firmness.

It was sweet to hear her speak.

"You must not give up, Henry," she continued. "You are young; we are both young. For myself, my whole life is before me; I can and will wait for you. Never fear that I shall desert you,—that is, if you love me as you have so often declared you do."

Henry groaned.

"You don't know quite what you are saying—what it means—the opposition of your father, the long waiting there must be even should he consent to the continuance of our engagement. It is very noble of you, but my duty, I fear, is quite clear."

"It surely lies with ourselves, Henry," she said. "I feel certain that your career will not end in this terrible way. You will get over it, and that before long."

And much more she said to the same effect, so that when he left her it was with lighter heart and firmer step. He still had her promise, and had agreed with her that he would say nothing to her father for the present.

But next morning, after a sleepless night, everything took on a different appearance. His position was so black, so overwhelming for the moment, that all the hope and confidence with which his sweetheart had

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filled him disappeared. The one ugly fact stood out above even the fact of her love for him. And that was that within the next two or three hours he must inevitably be posted on the blackboard of the Stock Exchange.

Almost mechanically he went as usual to his office, where his clerk had already arrived.

"You had better go and tell Tennant and the others that I shall not be able to settle with them this morning."

"There is no other way, sir?" asked the clerk.

Farmer merely shook his head.

Then he wrote a brief letter to the committee of the Stock Exchange, in which he said that he was unable to fulfil his contracts in the House.

Shortly afterwards the clerk was in the Exchange, where he found all its members assembled, busy settling their accounts with each other, some of whom were already beginning to feel some anxiety as to the absence of Henry Farmer. The clerk made his way to Mr. Tennant, the dealer with whom most of his master's transactions had been, and whispering to him drew him aside.

When Tennant heard what had happened he said:

"Well, I am not altogether surprised, for I cannot but know that Mr. Farmer has lost very heavily, and that for a considerable length of time."

Hardly had he uttered these words when the porter stationed at the door suddenly gave three loud and distinctly repeated knocks with a mallet. Instantly there was a dead silence.

The porter announced in the usual formula which obtains on such occasions that Mr. Henry Farmer presented his respects to the House, and regretted that he was unable to comply with his "bargains." In other words, Farmer acknowledged that he was not in a position to fulfil his engagements.

There was a moment's pause, then everything went on as if nothing had happened. Another man had gone down in the maelstrom of speculation, and the waves, having swallowed him up, showed no signs of it after the event. Scarcely a soul even looked at the blackboard on which was written Farmer's name.

When the clerk returned to the office, he found that Farmer had worked himself into a state of frenzy.

"What were they saying?" he asked.

When he was told what a small effect had been produced upon the members of the Stock Exchange by the news of his failures, he could scarcely believe that this matter, so all important to him, had made no greater sensation. As for himself, it was the only thing left in life.

Putting on his hat he went into the streets, and, scarcely knowing what he was doing or where he was going, wandered in the direction of London Bridge, staring in a crazed way into the faces of the people he met.

He was so full of his own trouble that he resented the interest in mere living shown by them in their alert movements. He dumbly wondered that the sun should shine with its accustomed glory, and he so wretched.

This was his frame of mind when at length he found himself standing by one of the parapets of London Bridge. The thought of suicide was not far away. "Why not make an end?" he asked himself.

Hardly struggling with himself, but drifting on along this current of morbid feeling, he was confirmed in it by the discovery that he had but a few shillings in his pocket, and by the reflection that this was all the money he had left in the world.

"Of what use is this?" he said, and flung the silver into the stream. In another moment he was on the parapet and was about to leap.

"You must not give up, Henry"—the words of Charlotte Dunbar came to him quite clearly, as if she had been standing by his side. Above the roar of the city, above the tumult of his thoughts, he heard her speak.

"It surely lies with ourselves, Henry"—that was the high note which she had struck. Again he heard her voice.

Weak and faint he fell back upon the pavement of the bridge.

Even as he fell, some one seized him by the hand and supported him, breaking the shock of the fall.

Farmer looked to see who had given him the helping hand. To his surprise and astonishment, the man who had come to his assistance was dressed in a foreign uniform and wore in his cap the white cockade which showed him to be a partisan of Louis XVIII. That monarch had been driven from Paris a short time before this by Napoleon after his escape from Elba.

"The Man of Blood of the Iron Island," was the title they had given Bonaparte when it was thought the powers had made an end of him. He had broken his bonds, and was now understood to be making a wonderful and magnificent stand—his last, as it proved.

"You are not well, my friend; is it not so?" asked the French officer. "It is indeed warm. Yet it should be a day of sunshine, a day of glory."

"A day of sunshine indeed," said Farmer, to whom the brightness of the day was a mockery.

"Yes, my friend," returned the Frenchman. "There is great news, wonderful news. The tyrant, the usurper, the devil—that Bonaparte, has been overthrown at last by your Duke of Wellington and by the Prince Blücher."

"Napoleon defeated? How do you know? Pardon me, there are so many rumours, and they nearly all prove to be false."

"This is no idle, lying rumour," said the officer. "I have it on the very best authority. See here, my friend, I have just come from the Embassy—the French Embassy—where my chief, the Count le Chartre, told me that Bonaparte had been annihilated in a great battle fought last Sunday not far from Brussels, There is no doubt whatever. Louis will now return to the city and sit on the throne of his fathers."

"How can the ambassador have heard this so quickly?" asked Farmer. "No one in London

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seemed to know anything about it a few minutes ago—at least, not in the City."

"A courier only arrived two hours ago; he had travelled from Ostend by a swift-sailing packet. After he had landed, he spared neither himself nor his horses to bring the intelligence to the Embassy. That is all I know, my friend."

"It is true, then?" said Farmer.

"Quite true—you may depend upon it," and the impulsive Frenchman shook hands with Farmer, exclaiming with joy, "The tyrant is overthrown."

It was in this way that Farmer heard of the Battle of Waterloo. Notwithstanding his dejection, the news of that great victory made him feel happier, and took him for a time out of himself. Suddenly a gleam of hope shone upon the miserable man.

"How many people in London," he asked himself, "had heard of Waterloo?"

An idea now came to him with lightning rapidity—all his despair and helplessness immediately gave place to quick and energetic action. He strode along the streets at the top of his speed towards his office, and yet not so quickly as to prevent him from regarding with some scrutiny the appearance of those he met.

No, there was nothing unusual in their aspect. Quite evidently these people did not know that a great battle had been fought, otherwise they would have certainly shown it in one way or another; and if they did not know—here, in the heart of the City, where everything, generally speaking, was known sooner than anywhere else—it was long odds that the Stock Exchange knew nothing of it either.

Having arrived at his office, he asked his clerk if there was any special news, or if there was any movement of an unusual character on 'Change. The clerk, who evidently thought that the question referred to his master's bankruptcy, replied that he had been in and out, but had heard nothing except some expressions of regret that Henry Farmer had succumbed.

Merely saying, "I think I have found a way out," Farmer dashed downstairs, and in two or three minutes was closeted with the senior partner of the great house of the Brownes, who were amongst the most influential members of the Stock Exchange, and who he knew were friendly to himself, and likely from what had already transpired between them in the way of business to place considerable confidence in him.

Mr. Albert Browne, on meeting Farmer, immediately took the opportunity of condoling with him on what had happened, and asked him why it was that he, Farmer, had not at least given them the chance of considering whether they should help him or not before the worst had taken place.

Scarcely pausing to thank Browne for what he had said, he asked him if had still sufficient faith in him to believe in what he was about to tell him, and to act on that belief by undertaking an extensive operation that morning on the Stock Exchange. He had received news, he said, and that from a source of absolute authority, of the very last importance—the result of which, if acted upon at once, would be undoubtedly a very successful piece of business.

But, before he would impart to him what he knew, he thought it only right that it should be on the distinct understanding that he was to receive one half of whatever profits—he was sure they would amount to a large sum—might be realised from the operation on 'Change.

"Otherwise, I presume," said Browne, "you will take the offer of this news elsewhere?"

"You could hardly expect me to do anything else," Farmer replied.

"I will make this bargain with you," said Browne, "if the news is as important as you say, I will either accept your offer—that is to give you half the profits that may ensue from what follows—or, if I do not consider the news important enough, I pledge my word to keep silence with regard to it, and not to be influenced by what you may tell me in any of our dealing to-day in the market."

The bargain was made. Without reserve Farmer told Browne exactly what had happened on London Bridge, and what the French officer had said.

Browne was convinced of the truth of what Farmer had told him, and resolved to take instant advantage of it. He rushed out into the street and succeeded in the course of half an hour in purchasing consols to a large amount.

In the meantime, Farmer, who had been greatly steadied by his satisfactory interview with Browne, and who already felt a different man from the wretched being who had meditated self-destruction on London Bridge only a few minutes before, had been thinking hard as to how he might further derive advantage from this unique opportunity.

Then it occurred to him that there was no reason why he should not make a bargain with another firm of stock-brokers similar to that he had made with Browne. He had given no promise to the latter not to communicate the all-important intelligence to another.

Having thought the matter over, he proceeded to another firm, that of Richards and Martin. There were no keener men of business in London than the two partners who traded under that name, and Farmer felt that if he could only succeed in convincing them that Waterloo had been fought and Napoleon overwhelmed, they would be ready to make even larger purchases than Browne.

Without losing any further time Farmer made his way to their private room, where he was lucky enough to find both men together. They had just come in to have lunch, which they were in the habit of having there, so that they could discuss the transactions they had undertaken during the early part of the day, and consider how they should proceed in the afternoon. They invited him to join them in the repast.

Here again he had to listen to the same commiseration for his fallen fortunes. "Why had he not asked them to give him a little assistance; it was a mistake to be too proud," and so on.

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Farmer thanked them, and told them that if they desired to do so, to help him, he was in a position to allow them to do so with the greatest possible advantage to themselves. Then he made them an offer similar to that he had made to Browne, and it was accepted, on much the same conditions.

So, once again, he poured out the story, the almost miraculous story, that he had been told by the French ensign.

Both men listened to him with the utmost eagerness. If the story were true, there could be no hesitation as to the course to be followed, and that immediately. Not only would the Funds rise considerably, but every other class of security would be enormously enhanced in value. They must buy for the "rise."

But was it true?

It was not without some difficulty that Farmer managed at length to impress them with the confidence in the Frenchman's story he himself possessed.

But he did succeed in the end.

The two partners whispered for a moment together, and agreed that Martin was forthwith to go on to 'Change and to purchase £200,000 worth of Consols and other Government securities. Meanwhile, Richards was to stay with Farmer, and to prevent him, either by holding him in talk, or forcibly if need be, from leaving the room. He might tell someone else, and thus the market would be spoilt.

It seemed to Farmer that an impossibly short time had elapsed to allow of Martin having been in the market and returned, when he appeared, his face working with excitement, to say that there had already been heavy purchases of Consols during the last half-hour, and that the price had gone up three per cent. He was afraid to buy.

But Farmer, who knew that the increased price was in all probability the result of Browne's investments, declared that even a rise of three per cent. was not nearly sufficient to discount the effects of so tremendous a victory.

Urged by his own imperious necessities, he used such language that once more the two partners were persuaded. This time, however, they determined to stake what was practically the whole credit of their firm, and their entire deposits with their bankers, in the game.

Their purchases now were not to be by the hundred thousand, but by the million. Afterwards, when the whole affair was over, the partners confessed that they had never acted in such a rash manner before in their lives, and they solemnly swore never to do so again.

The immense amount of buying done by this firm, added to the high character it bore upon the Stock Exchange, drove Omnium—which a week before had been as low as 2 premium—up to 5. The market took on a look of subdued excitement, of waiting, of expectancy; but with the exception of Farmer, the Brownes, and Richards and Martin, no one had the least idea that one of the greatest and most decisive battles in history had been fought.

Late that same evening Colonel Percy, the aide-de-camp of the Duke of Wellington, arrived in London with dispatches from that general, giving a tolerably full account of the defeat of Napoleon. The ministers lost no time in communicating the joyful news to the Prince Regent, and the following morning a *Gazette Extraordinary* was published by the Government announcing the overthrow of the hated Bonaparte.

The news at first seemed too good to be true, but as fuller details were received—circumstantial details mentioning, for instance, the number of cannon taken on the field, doubt gave place to certainty, and the nation rejoiced with such rejoicings as had never been before witnessed in England.

The effect upon the Stock Exchange was electrical, amidst scenes, the excitement of which defy description, the price of the Funds went up by leaps and bounds, until a rise of fifteen per cent., the greatest rise they were ever known to experience, was registered.

Of course the Brownes, and Richards and Martin sold out what they had purchased on the previous day as near the top as they could get.

Farmer's share of the profits realised from the operations of the two firms in question on that one memorable occasion exceeded £100,000.

He returned next day to the Stock Exchange, where he liquidated all accounts in full—rather against the advice of some of the members, who declared that it would be considered an act of weakness to act in this manner.

It is further recorded of him that soon afterwards he married Miss Charlotte Dunbar; that he amassed a large fortune out of his speculations, which after Waterloo were marked by as great a success as they had been characterised by failure before it; that he purchased with the money he had realised, a large estate in the county of Middlesex; and having done this, he made a vow to leave the Stock Exchange alone for ever—a vow which he religiously kept.

(*Next week: "Rothschild Outwitted."*)

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THE RIVAL QUEENS.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE RETOLD FROM THE FRENCH BY MARY FERMOR

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge. During the sitting of a council appointed by the Pope to decide which of the King's two wives is his lawful consort, Montruel visits Mahmoud-el-Reis to urge him to fulfil his promise to murder Ingeburge without delay. In order to gain access to the Queen's presence, the two men arrange that Mahmoud shall feign sickness and be taken to the hospital attached to the Abbey, where the Queen is confined. Eric, being at work on the cathedral as a mason, overhears the plot and determines to save Ingeburge. Meanwhile the Saracen partakes of a drug which renders him unconscious, is conveyed to the Abbey by Montruel, and ministered to by the Queen herself. She is heavily veiled, and Mahmoud is unaware of her identity. He tells her of his misson to the Abbey, hearing which Ingeberge faints. In order to restore her, he raises her veil, and is surprised to find her to be the living image of his beloved Dilah, and her twin soul. For this reason he vows to protect her from all harm, even when Ingeburge confesses that she is the King's wife. After considerable delay Eric succeeds in gaining audience with the Prior, and tells him of the Queen's danger.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Twin Soul.

When the Moslem finished his story with the words "That is why I wished to kill the Queen," all sense of personal danger had left Ingeburge's heart, but she cowered under the mysterious power of this man's will, and in her tortured mind there rose visions of the King's dead body lying in one of those rooms at the Louvre that she had not been permitted to enter, pierced to the heart with that cruel, glittering weapon that flashed even now before her eyes. She could not even plead for her lord's life, her tongue was paralysed by the awful weight of fear.

But Mahmoud's voice softened as he saw the sorrow-stricken woman crouching at his feet, the passion faded from his face and the blood-lust died out of his heart. It was as if Dilah suffered at his hands, and as though she were pleading for her twin soul.

"I have sought in the Western Heavens for the shining star that Dilah watches when she utters my name ere seeking her couch, but the star is not there," he said. "The mystic cord which unites our hearts has thus been broken, and it is to replace our lost star that the kindly Fates have led me to the side of my beloved's twin soul. But what shall I say to Dilah," he broke off suddenly, "when she asks me what I have done to win her? When she bids me show her the infidel's blood that was to be the price of her hand? Will she not ask me if I am a true man, or a base coward, unworthy of a woman's love?"

As these thoughts coursed through his mind, Ingeburge remained silent, save for a stifled sob which now and then broke from her, but a powerful advocate was pleading her cause in this strange man's breast. Mahmoud-el-Reis had never before hesitated in the path of what he believed to be his duty, but now he had a hard battle to fight with himself. On the one hand was arrayed the promise of Dilah as his bride, the solemn oath which bound him and all members of his order to obey without flinching the master's orders, the wild fanaticism which is born in every son of the desert; while against all this was a dream, a mere sweet illusion, a

Passed the back of his hand over his burning forehead.

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poetic fancy, fostered by the wealth of his artist's imagination.

The forces were unequally matched, but the weaker side was embodied in the form of a lovely woman, living, loving and weeping beneath his eyes.

Mahmoud-el-Reis loved with the intensity that characterised his whole being, and love mastered fanaticism—the embodied dream chased away even the vision of the incensed Lord of the Mountain, for behind his dark tyrannical face smiled the sweet eyes of Dilah with loving approval.

The fair daughter of the North seemed merged into one being with her dark-eyed, olive-skinned sister of the South, whom the Moslem loved with a love stronger than death.

He shook himself with an unwonted gesture of impatience, and passed the back of his hand over his burning forehead, then, turning to Ingeburge, he spoke out the tormenting thoughts of his heart.

"Listen, Queen. What does all that matter? She and you are but one soul parted in the flesh by the will of Allah. If I strike your heart, shall I not pierce hers? And if I raise my hand against the King, will not you fall beneath the blow?"

Though much of what he said was obscure to her, Ingeburge had that keen intuitive sympathy that so quickly establishes itself between those who love, and she could follow the workings of his mind sufficiently to grasp his meaning. She saw a ray of light shining in upon her soul's darkness, a gleam of hope in her hour of despair.

"Yes, yes. If the King dies, I die too," she said fervently.

"Then you must live!" cried the Moslem, "for if you died, would not Dilah, your twin soul, soon languish and fade in the tomb? Do I not know that you two share but one soul, and when I meet her there in the shady palm-grove, radiant and lovely in the joy of our reunion, I shall say:

"'My poniard was raised, the King's life was mine! I could have fulfilled my oath, and gained with one blow the joys which the Prophet has promised to his faithful children! I could have——'

"I can still do it!" he repeated almost savagely, as the old struggle once more threatened to assail him.

The Queen looked up at the sudden change in his voice and watched the workings of his face with breathless anxiety, but the dark mood passed and the invisible foe was beaten off for ever. The victory was gained, blind fanaticism gave way before love, tender pity broke the iron band that bound him to deeds of blood.

"Your King shall live, but he shall live to love you, I swear it by the name of the Prophet! And when I hold Dilah in my last embrace I shall say:

"Beloved, I return to a traitor's death, not to the nuptial feast; for I have given my life and my earthly bliss to save thy twin soul."

As he spoke these words in a kind of dreamy ecstasy, a sound was heard outside. Hasty steps were coming down the corridor, doors were being noisily opened and shut and voices were heard talking in excited tones. Ingeburge turned to listen, and the Syrian resumed his usual calm demeanour.

A woman's voice was heard among the rest, saying:

"This way, the Prior said it was here that he had brought Queen Angel!"

"Eve, it is Eve," murmured Ingeburge.

The door was forced open from the corridor and Eric dashed in.

"Look in every cell," cried a man. "If no one has gone out of the Abbey we must find the assassin."

"That is Eric's voice," said the Queen wonderingly.

The steps had reached the door, a hand shook it from outside and a voice exclaimed:

"This is the last cell! It must be here. Now we shall have the assassin!"

"Queen," said Mahmoud impressively, "if you wish to save the King's life, you would do well to protect mine, for he is threatened by other daggers than this."

"Eve, Eve," called Ingeburge, "I am here, come to me, my sister."

The Syrian said no more, but stood watching the Queen and calmly awaiting the issue of events. At the Queen's cry the door was forced open from the corridor and Eric dashed in, closely followed by Eve and half-a-dozen of the archers who formed the guard of the Abbey. An excited group of monks and lay-brothers remained outside, peering in with timid curiosity at the dreaded stranger.

The young Dane was armed with a dagger which he would have plunged into the Moslem's breast, but Ingeburge stayed his hand, and, hard though it was, he obeyed her. Eve was clinging convulsively to the Queen, as though to interpose her slender form between that of her mistress and the assassin's poniard. At any rate she was determined that if she might not die *for* her beloved sister Angel, she would die *with* her.

For a moment the guards stood paralysed at the sight of the man they had seen carried in senseless, and with Brother Martin had spoken of as being dead two hours before.

The Syrian was standing erect, in the full vigour of his manhood, with all his faculties of mind and body in perfect order.

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He drew the dagger which he had sheathed.

It must be sorcery; he was in league with the Evil One. It were well to rid the earth of such a child of darkness, if only their weapons would avail in such a case.

Three or four archers sprang upon him, but he made no attempt to protect himself beyond raising his hand to push aside the halberd nearest to his breast, with as unconcerned a gesture as if he had been brushing off a fly.

Turning to Ingeburge he said, with dignity and calmness:

"Queen, you have to speak but one word to save my life! I await that gracious favour at your hands."

"Down with the assassin! He would kill the Queen! Down with him!" cried the frightened little crowd outside.

Ingeburge was touched by his confidence in her and she recognised his claim. She opened her lips to speak the word he needed, when the vision of him as he was an hour ago, fierce, cold and implacable, returned to her with overpowering force. She hesitated, the words would not come, her eyes again caught sight of the crystal poniard which he still held in his strong grasp.

"He is an infidel, how can I trust him? If I spare his life he will take that of Philip, my lord and husband!" she said to herself, as the horrible picture of the murdered King rose again before her eyes.

"Seize him!" she panted with a terrified shudder.

Still Mahmoud-el-Reis made no effort to defend himself, and though he was more than a match for his enemies, he submitted quietly while they bound him hand and foot with the ropes they had brought for the purpose. Then turning towards the Queen, his face softened by a sad smile, he murmured.

"I forgive you, for you have wronged me out of love to him! I read it in your eyes, and I forgive you for love's sake! You love well, indeed!"

While this little scene was being enacted in the cell, those without experienced a sudden shock. It was as though the ancient walls which had stood the test of time through three centuries, had shivered at the touch of some mysterious, unknown hand.

All eyes and thoughts were turned on the Moslem as the probable cause of this incident. He had summoned the powers of darkness to aid him in his hour of need! This was the first solution of the mystery that naturally suggested itself to the minds of timid, superstitious men, but stern fact soon proved that here was no invisible foe. A surging, shouting, motley throng of men, armed with any and every weapon they could lay their hands on, followed by a train of shrieking women, now surrounded the Abbey, and were battering the gates with unmistakable earthly violence, however much their motives might savour of demoniacal intent.

Most of the Prior's timid flock ran hither and thither in search of a safe hiding place, but a few of the more daring spirits ranged themselves alongside of the archers and sought to inspire their weaker brethren with something of their courage.

"Help! Help! The glorious Abbey of Saint Martin is attacked! To the rescue, one and all!"

Their efforts availed but little, and it was a very small, if resolute body that prepared to ward off the assailants.

The archers hurriedly left the cell, and only one or two monks remained with Ingeburge and Eve, while Eric constituted himself their guard. He hardly ever took his eyes from the expressive face and motionless form of the captive Syrian, and though he longed to go and take his part in the thickest of the fight, fear for his Queen, should she be left again in the power of this desperate man, prompted him to stay at his post.

Mahmoud-el-Reis, even when apparently most helpless, had the power of inspiring awe in those who had reason to fear him.

From time to time Eve thought she caught the name of "Ingeburge, Ingeburge," amongst the mad confusion of sounds. But who could dare to use the Queen's name at such a time?

The monks were too frightened to move, they felt danger coming nearer every moment, and yet they dare not flee before it. They prayed with all the fervour of their hearts, and asked who it could be that dared to invade so sacred a retreat! What heathen hords had over-run the realm, to bring back the horrors of Atilla or Genseric?

The only two who maintained anything like their wonted composure were the Queen and the Moslem. Her whole mind was still dominated by Mahmoud-el-Reis, she could not keep her terrified gaze from his face. His mission of death, his strange story of love, his generous abandonment of self, all kept coursing through her distracted mind, and keen pangs of self-reproach stung her as she looked at the bonds which her word had fastened on him.

More than once she was tempted to say to Eric:

"Cut those bonds! He is a true man, he has spared my life and has promised me that of the King! He alone can save the life of Philip Augustus!"

But the words failed to find utterance. The prejudices of her life and training were too powerful to give way permanently before a romantic sense of interest and admiration for a Moslem assassin.

So absorbed was she in her own mental struggle that the greater one going on below them made no impression on her. Every time she caught Mahmoud's eye, with its look of deep and resigned melancholy, her heart was touched, even though she trembled with fear. She felt as one gazing into some unfathomable abyss which no human eye can penetrate, and whose depths refuse to reveal the secrets which attract us.

He was huddled on the floor just as the guards had left him, passive and observant, too proud to ask for mercy, too much of a fatalist to experience fear.

The noise had become deafening, and it was evident to the listeners that the attacking force had succeeded in forcing an entrance by the great door of the Abbey.

Mahmoud's quick ear caught every variation of sound, and at this last developement a curious smile crossed his face.

Eric, who was watching his prey with eyes quickened by anxiety for those he loved, noticed this change of expression,

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and though he consoled himself with the thought that the Moslem was too securely bound to attempt an escape, he involuntarily felt a sensation of fear, as if this man knew of some new danger threatening Queen Angel. The Syrian's smile gave a fresh significance to the tumult, in Eric's mind, and he drew the dagger which he had sheathed at the Queen's command.

Mahmoud-el-Reis saw the action and made an almost imperceptible gesture of contempt.

So they waited.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Maître Samson in Command.

In order to explain the cause of the unexpected disturbance at the Abbey St. Martin, it will be necessary to go back to Paris early in the evening of the same day.

At the hour when the masons left work at Nôtre-Dame, and the great building with its frame of scaffolding was consigned to peace and solitude during the hours of the night, a large number of apprentices, journeymen and lookers-on were wending their way, with wild mirth, in the direction of St. Jaques-la-Boucherie, where Montruel's house was so cleverly concealed. But though in a measure the guests of "The Friend of the King" these worthy gentlemen were not going to be entertained at that nobleman's residence.

While the regular, hard-working masons sought their well-earned rest and enjoyed their frugal supper, this noisy, idle troop disappeared within the various taverns in the adjoining streets of ill-fame.

Another crowd, consisting of the rabble which congregated round the cathedral, and which represented a still lower stratum in the community, emerged from the inclosure and swarmed over the great bridge, and every dirty alley sent forth its contribution to swell the unsavoury train. Lame men managed to limp along at no inconsiderable pace, the blind found eyes to see their way in the thronged and narrow thoroughfares, women dropped their feeble offspring for which they had been pleading so pathetically during the day, and all rushed madly on.

Every scoundrel and vagabond in Paris was let loose to work the will of Madame Agnes and her henchman Amaury Montruel.

A handful of Free-lances escorted this undisciplined mob, which as a rule was kept out of sight as a body, and only drew attention to its existence by individual appeals or by appearing in small detachments; but to-night was their carnival, and however empty their pockets, each man and woman was catered for right royally as they presented themselves at the tavern doors.

Wine flowed in rivers to slake the thirst and fire the passions of the ignorant and outcast, who were thus being bribed to carry out the designs of the unscrupulous woman who shared the throne.

The favourite place of meeting was undoubtedly the tavern kept by Maître Jean Fontanelle, the husband of "La Fontanelle," who had unconsciously led poor Agnes the Fair to her doom at the hands of Montruel. This seemed to be the head-quarters of the ragged army.

Tristan de Pamiers and Maître Samson were chief in command, and the latter was giving orders to those who were to act under them.

Samson's face looked more than ever like that of an antiquated witch. He had consumed an amount of wine since the morning that would have killed two ordinary men, especially when the quality of the beverage was taken into consideration, but his head was still clear, even though his attenuated legs showed some disinclination to carry his meagre body.

Tristan was drunk and made no attempt to conceal it, though his libations had fallen far short of those consumed by his comrade. He was lolling on a wooden bench, while the crafty clerk was endeavouring to steady himself on a rickety table, rallying his trusty lieutenants round him.

"Come here, Ezekiel! Here, Tréfouilloux! Jean, Pierre, François, Giles, all of you! Come here."

The first to answer this summons were, as might be supposed, Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux, though it would have needed a quick eye to recognise our afflicted friends of the pavement. No one who had in the kindness of his heart or the keenness of his curiosity, parted with his hardly earned money to peer for the *very last* time into the horrible wound of the wild boar's victim; or had stopped to throw a coin into the lap of the twisted and tortured ex-crusader, could have detected any resemblance to these poor creatures in the able-bodied, if somewhat lean men who came forward to answer Maître Samson's hoarse, rasping cry.

They were both wearing the loose cassock and small clothes affected by the students, while battered caps were cocked jauntily on one side of their low, receding foreheads.

They looked to the last degree repulsive, each if possible uglier than his fellow, but still they might easily have been mistaken for two of those hapless, prematurely-aged scholars whose intellect and reputation had long been swamped in the wine cup.

Pierre, Jean, François and the others, all similarly attired, soon crowded round the table, and in a few moments the tavern was thronged to suffocation with these spurious students.

At the sight of our two famous friends, Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux, Tristan did not know whether to laugh or to curse. He was just clear enough in his head to feel

"Hola! Comrade!" cried Samson, plucking his sleeve

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thoroughly ashamed of the night's proceedings, in fact he could not have played his part if he had been sober, for he was proud of his title of "King of the Basoche," and loved his festive subjects after his own wild fashion. As for this rabble, he would gladly have helped to hang the lot of them!

"*Tête-diable;*" he groaned: "It's desecration! profanity!"

"Bah!" retorted Samson, who had caught the words. "We've only got knaves instead of fools. And for my part, I'd rather have this lot than the other!"

Tristan had to clutch the gold coins in his pocket to keep his hands off the man who thus sneered at him and his fellows. How gladly would he have plunged his dagger into the heart of his hated pay-master!

The leader of the expedition now began to harangue his forces in a voice that would not have done discredit to a town-crier. He complimented them on their appearance and praised their untried bravery. He impressed upon them the dignity of their present position as representatives of the great Republic of letters, and exhorted them to display their learning for the benefit of those whom their united action was to influence.

"As we pass through the streets," he continued, "we want all the people to say as they listen to our learned remarks, 'There is the University, the daughter of the Church, protesting against Ingeburge the alien, the scourge of France, the curse of the King!'"

"Capital, first-rate, master!" applauded Tréfouilloux. "The people of Paris shall say what you wish: I'll answer for that. *Magnificat! Cicero! Benedictus!* Only let us be off before the old monks have emptied their larder!"

"A good thought, friend, but the Abbey cellars will repay your trouble even if the larder is scantily provisioned. *En route!*"

The supposed members of the University made a desperate rush for the door, pushing, jostling and trampling on each other without a qualm as they thought of the wine in store for them, and after they had forced their way out of the tavern they speedily found themselves in collision with the groups that were standing in the narrow street.

Tristan, who had been listening to the oration with increased disgust and repugnance made no offer to move, but sat gnawing his nails in horrible indecision.

"Hola! Comrade!" cried Samson, plucking his sleeve with a bad attempt at gaiety. "Aren't you coming with us?"

"It's profanation! Do it yourself!"

"Nonsense, we want you to talk Latin, the pure language of the classics. The jargon of these rascals is all very well for the mob, with its asses' ears, but if any scholar passed us!"

"Heaven forbid!" muttered Tristan as he bent his head lower at this picture of further degradation.

Maitre Samson watched him with an evil leer, and bending down, he whispered:

"Have you forgotten the prettiest girl in Paris? Eh?"

"She's gone," sighed Tristan. "I've watched the house for days, and have hunted in every nook and corner of the city, but I can't find a trace of her! Ah! she was a little beauty!" he went on in a maudlin tone. "Never was a form so graceful or a face so sweet! Venus herself could not have surpassed her! And to think I have lost her!"

"Yes, she was a nice little thing, as girls go," agreed Samson, "and you're right, she's lost to *you* at any rate."

The King of the Basoche sat up and looked hard at his companion in whose tone he thought he detected some hidden meaning.

"Lost to *me!* What do you mean. Do you know where she is then?"

Samson answered by a vague movement of the head, which caused his exasperated listener to spring to his feet and seize him by the shoulders, shouting as he did so:

"Speak, you cur! Or I'll make you tell me pretty quickly!"

"If I tell you, will you swear to come with us?"

"Yes, even though I loathe the whole thing! It's profanation!"

"And you'll speak Latin all the time?"

"Yes, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, anything you like."

"Well then, my friend, you'll have better luck than you deserve, for the prettiest girl in Paris is in the very place we're going to."

"What, at the Abbey St. Martin?"

"Yes, in attendance on Madame Ingeburge."

Tristan clapped on his shabby cap, gave himself a good shake and, dashing through the door, had soon fought his way to the front of the procession, shouting Latin oaths at the top of his voice.

Samson followed more leisurely, chuckling to himself:

"I thought *that* card would win the game for us."

In the Rue des Arcis the University, headed by a gorgeous banner, met the brotherhood of the Freemasons who were also flying their colours, and with combined forces the whole mass moved forward with some show of order in the direction of the Porte aux Peintres, followed by the usual train of stragglers that go with a multitude.

Wherever they passed the greatest excitement greeted them. Heads were thrust out of windows and doors, men wondered, while women pretended to be frightened, and all listened eagerly to catch the words shouted from time to time by a man with a clear, strong voice:

"*Le loz des écoles et les privilèges de l'Université!*' while the crowd supplied the chorus:

"Death to Ingeburge the alien! Down with the ruin of France and the curse of the King!"

Those who had not seen the prologue to this shameless comedy, marked only its apparent significance. The worthy citizens saw in this masquerading mob the representatives of learning uniting in one common demonstration against the cause of the nation's woe.

They knew that the King supported and encouraged the schools, and, to their ignorant minds, it was convincing that such a body should express publicly their opinion on so weighty a matter. They were impressed by the high-sounding jargon and very soon the by-standers took up the cry they *did* understand: "Down with the alien!" The whole city seemed infected by the uproar, and the numbers swelled at every step, till it looked as if all Paris had gone mad together.

"This is a grand success," said Samson, "the beggars are doing their work well!"

"Yes," answered Tristan, with a high-flown Latin quotation, "but I wish they would get on a little faster."

Ezekiel was meanwhile shouting lustily:

"*Tirliput, Credo, Discipulis suis, Ergo, Porro Confiteor!*" while Tréfouilloux kept the ball rolling with his favourite stock phrases.

How could such a display of learning fail to make a deep impression on the unlearned and credulous?

By the time they reached the Porte aux Peintres half the townsfolk had joined them. Some were decrying Ingeburge with the full force of their lungs, others were trying to imitate the doggerel rubbish which they mistook for Latin, and all were in a state of the wildest excitement. Vagabonds, mock masons and sham students yelled and swore in turn, as if the Furies had been let loose on the earth, and on all sides of the main body, tawdrily dressed girls and unkempt women danced and sang with a zeal that was even surpassing that of the men.

Most of these attendant dames were supplied with cans of wine and drinking cups, with which to ply the guards in charge of the gate, by which means they hoped that the rabble might gain easy egress from the city.

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(To be continued.)

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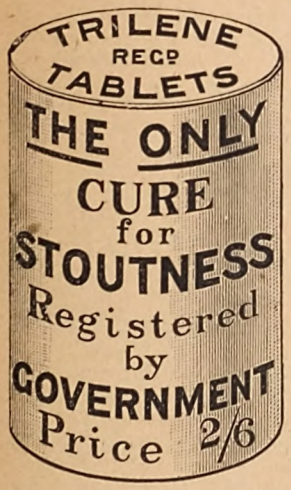

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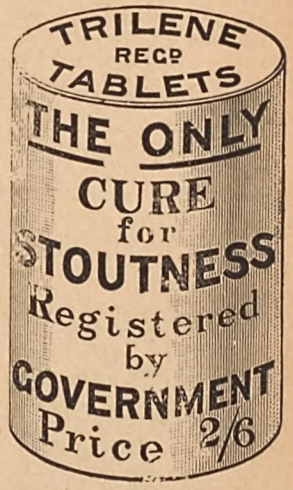

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.
"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Plasnewydd, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

MISS WELLS, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

MISS DUGGLEBY, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

MISS C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

MISS MACPHERSON, Balnagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontychin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

MARIAN TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

MISS GILLESPIE, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT LONDON.

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"CAPTAIN" HIGGINS.

"OF course, I wasn't a captain, but then he'd no call to go and hurt my feelings," argumentatively said Captain Higgins.

"Ah," said the ship's steward, "some folks 'ill say anythink. Down him with a belayin' pin's wot you ought to have done."

"I don't hold with spoilin' good belayin' pins on them officers in the Queen's service," continued Captain Higgins, dreamily watching his smoke-wreaths float through the air. "What with keepin' their ships from runnin' aground and maintainin' discipline, 'taint no easy time for 'em; but still, as I said before, they needn't put on airs when I comes along. I'm a sort of captain in my way; if it ain't their way, they might stretch a point."

"From wot I knows of 'em," suggested the ship's steward, "they'd rather empty one, it being, as you may say, the manner of all folks that float the seas to swallow whatever they can get hold of. It's the salt in the air as makes 'em so thirsty. Somehow, the air's saltish to-night."

Captain Higgins, taking the hint, sent into the hut for liquid refreshments. The two old cronies sat at the Captain's little wicket-gate and watched the stately ships sail on through the Black Sea mouth of the Bosphorus.

"Fifteen years have I commanded the lifeboat here," resumed Captain Higgins—"Fifteen years have I commanded the lifeboat up here, the only Englishman among 'em, and folk have took to callin' me 'Captain' quite natural-like. I am captain of that 'ere crew, and every man of 'em knows it."

"To be sure!" said the ship's steward; "to be sure! You have a way with you when roused, Captain Higgins, as makes it impossible for even a 'eathen in his blindness to mistake you."

"Bein' gen'rally respected and looked up to," said Captain Higgins, soothed by the steward's whole-hearted admiration, "when I hears as Her Majesty's gunboat *Snapshot* is a-comin' up the Bosphorus jest to give the Sultan wot for if he doesn't behave 'isself——"

"Abdul the Dam——"

"Ladies present," said Captain Higgins severely, pointing with the stem of his pipe in the direction of the hut. "Ladies, steward; where's your manners?"

The abashed steward murmured an apology.

"When I hears about the gunboat, I goes down to Pera on board that little black craft there (he pointed to his horse, which was tied to the railing, too dejected even to swish away the flies), and orders some cards to be printed with 'Captain Higgins' on 'em."

"And quite right, too," murmured the steward, looking wistfully at the bottle on the deal table.

"Then I calls on the ship and sends in my card. I was shown down into the first officer's cabin. Presently he sails in holdin' my card in his hand and a-lookin' at me hard. '*Captain* Higgins?' says he, with a snigger. '*Captain!* May I ask what vessel you are commanding just now, *Captain* Higgins?' And he grinned all over him, and I stood lookin' as red as a lobster, not expectin' to be jeered at by a countryman of my own."

"Nat'rally," said the steward, absently helping himself to a fresh supply of whisky.

"Hold hard, there," said Captain Higgins, gently yet firmly repossessing himself of the bottle. "I own I was took aback. But I asked him to come up here and see me put my men through the Briches Drill the next arternoon, and he said he'd come. 'Good arternoon,' says I. 'Good arternoon, *Captain* Higgins,' says he, in the same silly, jeerin' kind of way; and I went off makin' up my mind to get even with him."

"And did you?" asked the steward, again absently feeling for the bottle.

The Captain drew it back to his side of the table "In course I did. He come up next day, and the men went through the drill. Then I made 'em put on their cork jackets, and we took him out into deep water. He, not knowin' Turkish, didn't suspect nothing when I gave the word to upset the lifeboat. When she'd righted, we all got in again, 'cept him. He couldn't swim a stroke, so I poked out an oar, and he held on to it.

"'Haul me in, my good fellow,' says he sharply. 'You've spoilt my clothes with your confounded clumsiness.'

"Somehow, that oar dipped, and he got his mouth full of water. 'Are you going to leave me here all night?' he says, as if the truth was beginning to strike him. 'If your men was my men, I'd have a word to say when I got 'em on board ship again.'

"'I'm generally called *Captain* Higgins by my friends,' said I, giving the oar another jerk.

"'I'll die first,' says he, as soon as he could get his mouth open.

"I pulls out my pipe and begins to smoke. As the sun went down, the water got chilly. 'Are you going to keep me here all night, you infernal scoundrel?' he asks at last.

"'*Captain* Higgins is quite willing to take you in again,' says I, quiet like.

"He looked round again and saw some porpoises driving the fish in shore. Being new to the place, he took 'em for sharks. 'I'll be obliged to you if you'll haul me into the boat, *Captain* Higgins,' he says quite civilly. 'If it rested with me I'd see you d——'"

"Ladies!" said the steward severely. "Ladies, 'Iggins."

"'I'd see you further first' he says; 'but me being an officer and my life being of some use to my country, I'll be obliged to you, *Captain* Higgins, if you'll haul me in before those sharks have a go at me.'"

"And then?"

"I hauled him in and gave him a nip of whisky. When he saw they was only porpoises and not sharks he turned quite green, but he apologises like a gentleman and asks me to dinner."

"Was it a good dinner?" asked the steward.

"I don't remember," said Captain Higgins, somewhat shortly. "All I know is that it took me two days to weave my way up here again after it. Mrs. Higgins knows more about it than I do. Hush, here she comes."

G. B. BURGIN.

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SHORT TRUTHS.

Town Crier asks: "What is the most common name for a street in London?"———In the 40,000 streets of London, "Park" is the name which is most frequently repeated. There are no fewer than 314 streets in which the word Park figures, such as Park Street, Park Lane, Park Place, etc.

E. S.—It costs the country between a million and a million and a quarter of money annually to keep our soldiers and sailors supplied with clothes.

H. H.—It is a mistake to suppose that children grow faster by night than by day. Light, air, and exercise are all necessary for rapid and healthy growth, and those children who are brought up in the air and sunshine, and live a great part of their time out of doors, are those in whom growth is most rapid.

L. D.—The first domesticated animal seems to have been the dog. The most ancient variety in Europe was the so-called peat-dog, which belonged to the Neolithic period. Four other varieties were known in the Bronze and the lake-dwelling periods. Direct descendants of these are the German hunting-hound, the shepherd's dog, and the poodle.

Alice.—There are 270 officials in the Queen's household.

F. R. C. S. writes describing another of Nature's many barometers. He says: "A piece of rock salt, say one cubic inch in size, suspended by a string from any convenient nail near to a window, will faithfully foretell the weather. During dull, but not rainy weather, a slight amount of moisture gathers on the salt, and the approach of rain is shown by that moisture collecting in a drop, which hangs pendant until the shower falls. Then, as if in affinity with the rain, it breaks away, followed by other drops, with some rapidity if the rainfall is a heavy one. The advent of dry weather is, of course, indicated by a total lack of moisture. Such a piece of salt will give correct indications, up to the limit of its power, for a whole year."

Anxious.—It is not a fact that genius and stoutness never go together. Plenty of men of genius have been fat. Dr. Johnson, Balzac, Rossini, and Dumas the elder are examples of men whose circumference has been almost as great as their talents.

Leonard.—The Prince of Wales holds three dukedoms, those of Cornwall, Rothesay, and Saxe-Coburg Gotha; three earldoms, those of Chester, Carrick, and Dublin; and one baronetcy, that of Renfrew. Besides these titles, he has the right to call himself Lord of the Isles of Scotland and Prince of Saxony.

Mabel.—There is no reason why your canary should not live to be twelve or fifteen years of age if you look after it properly. Those flying at liberty in their native island live to a much more advanced age, however.

C. M. W.—The custom of men wearing black clothes for evening dress is said to have had its origin in the black military tunic which was worn nearly three hundred years ago.

Fish is very fond of the humble bloater, and is afraid that the supply will fail. "It is estimated that fishermen take 900,000,000 annually on our coasts!" he writes in dismay.———You will be still more horrified to learn that man is responsible for only 5 per cent. of the destruction wrought upon your favourite fish. Its enemies, including birds, are very numerous. Some authorities place the figure much higher than you. However, the mother herring lays 30,000 eggs a year, so the supply is likely to be maintained.

Couvre-Feu.—No, it is not quite like the curfew bell, although it is a curious custom. At Seoul, in Corea, every man is bound by law to retire to his home when the bronze bell of the city has proclaimed the hour of sunset. This is the time for closing the gates, and any man caught in the streets after that hour is liable to a flogging. Women, however, are allowed to go about and visit their friends.

Nag.—You are thinking of Incitatus, the horse of the Roman Emperor, Caligula, which was made a priest and consul, had a manger of ivory, and drank wine from a golden pail.

Anglo-Saxon writes to ask what nation I consider to be the best behaved and most well mannered people in Europe?———The Norwegians, undoubtedly. They, of all classes, exhibit the peculiar external attributes of high breeding in a most remarkable degree. Haughtiness and cringing seem equally unknown among them. They possess a quiet sense of dignity and independence, no doubt owing to the fact that they are owners by inheritance of the land upon which they live, and that they have never passed through the degrading stage of feudal tyranny and serfdom. The peculiar absence of snobbishness and flunkeyism in Norway is largely attributable to the fact that aristocratic influences, the aping of style, and our prevalent ideas of "station" and "social position" are so little known there.

T. H. asks: "What are the privileges accorded to members of Parliament out of the House?"———All I have been able to discover is the right to sit in a particular pew at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and that of procuring a reading order at the British Museum without the signature of a London householder.

A Constant Reader has a bet with a friend as to whether there are any mines in existence a mile deep. His friend says there are not; he maintains that there are.———I am afraid you are the one who must pay up this time, for the deepest mine in existence is the Lambert coal mine in Belgium, with a depth of 3,490 feet. The second in depth is the Birkenberg silver mine of Austria, 3,280 feet, and the third the Zwickan coal mine with a depth of 2,637 feet.

D. C. D.—The percentage of twins to all births differs widely in different countries. Ireland stands highest in this respect with 17½, and Spain lowest with 8½ births of twins per 1,000 births. In England the number is 11 per 1,000 and in Scotland 11½.

A. P. P. asks: "Which tree in this country is the first to lose its leaves?"———Season and locality have a great deal to do with this question. Taking the country all over in average seasons, probably the horse-chestnut is the tree which first loses its leaves. Its foliage appears very early in the spring, and it is only to be expected, therefore, that it should wither and fall at a correspondingly early period. Often chestnut leaves begin to litter the ground as early as the month of July.

E. C. H. asks: "How much should a person eat?"———Doctors disagree, and always have disagreed, as to the quantity of food a day required by Nature for the support of the human system. Most of them seem to think that between five and six pounds of solid and liquid food is the golden mean between excess and improper abstinence, but, after all, the quantity of food that may be beneficially taken cannot be regulated by fixed rules. It depends upon the size, the occupation and habits of the individual, and other conditions, and can only be ascertained by individual experience.

R. B.—Hazel eyes are believed to be more subject to disease than those of any other colour. This opinion arises from the fact that makers of artificial eyes are more often called upon to provide those of this hue than any other, in spite of the fact that hazel eyes are by no means the most common.

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 489. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 14TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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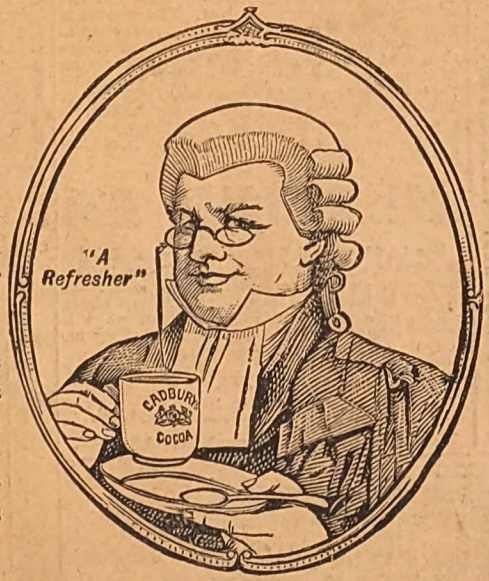

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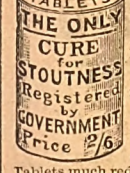

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SHORT STORIES

No. 489.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending May 14th, 1898.

Edited by Arthur Morrison

The Failure of the Class.

The doctor had ten miles to ride before he reached home. The road was muddy; the air was not cold, but it was raw and chill, and the mud clung to his horse's fetlocks. Old Calline put down her head and plodded on through the mire. The doctor's shoulders drooped over her neck; the rain, which had ceased, had soaked his shabby great-coat and dripped down over his mud-splashed boots.

"How untidy I do look!" he grumbled, as he took out his handkerchief to brush the drops from his face and noticed the holes in the linen. "I don't believe that Aunt Maggie ever mends my stockings. I look just what I am, a shabby country doctor! Confound it, how he ground it into me!"

Old Calline stumbled; he pulled her head up sharply.

"It's not your fault, old girl, that I missed marrying the only woman I ever loved, and settled down in this out-of-the-way part; and now, when my old class-mate comes to see me, I am cut up because I see how he has succeeded and I have failed. I suppose I am so busy usually, I don't see things. Oh, dear! I'm the failure of the class!"

His laugh rang out, jarring the air, not at all the loud, genial laugh which many a patient had found better than medicine. Old Calline pricked up her ears and struggled into a heavy trot, as if struck. He patted her with a soothing word. The doctor's "softness" with respect

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to animals was a common jest in the country. The old mare, feeling all was well and that her easy-going master had not gone crazy, relaxed into her customary jog; and John Fair's thoughts returned to the channel in which they had run since the meeting with Dr. Phil Martin.

Martin was a man rather below than above the middle height. He had a dogged, pleasant manner, with a certain nerve and quickness of vision, but in no wise a man marked out for success; yet Martin was a great city physician, earning hundreds a year, while Fair took cows and pigs for a long doctor's bill, and lived in an old cottage with an old woman to care for him.

There was something in the city man's clothes, in his neat-clipped, assured enunciation, in his air of one accustomed to deference, in his very courtesy of manner and word, which spoke of the man who knew he had succeeded and which galled the soul of the man who knew he had failed.

Martin and he had been class-mates together; they had been house surgeons on the staff of the same hospital, never actually intimate, always thrown a great deal in each other's way. Twice it had befallen them to have to tackle one of those medical puzzles that have a poignant interest, because the success or failure in solving them means life or death. And both times Phil was wrong and he was right.

On another occasion Phil had his way and the poor fellow had died. The autopsy showed that he, John Fair, could have saved him. It was a dreadful mortification to Phil; it was something different but quite as keen in its pain to John; he had actually burst into tears after a night of frantic effort to save the man, he having gone into the house-staff room for a moment and hearing of the man's death there.

"Oh! I could have saved him," he had muttered, fortunately so low that nobody heard him.

And yet this was what he had become—a country doctor, who lived on his farm and augmented his professional earnings by selling stock.

"And because I took the medical journals and bought all the new instruments, and wore my old overcoat to get books, and wrote articles on pneumonia, I thought I was in touch with the world. I'm not in it!" John uttered the words savagely aloud. There was no one to hear. Old Calline paid no attention; she was accustomed to hear the doctor discuss his cases.

Colonel Barnes and the doctor were great chums. Once a week, the colonel, the doctor, Miss Lettie Barnes and the colonel's wife, played whist; and then the colonel mixed one of his famous punches, and he and the doctor would sit until late and chat about things in general.

The doctor always played with Mrs. Barnes, who was the most docile of pupils and invariably played according to rule. Hers was what is called a safe game. Miss Letty, on the contrary, would have delighted the great Desbarolles with her brilliant ventures and her subtle schemes and traps. The colonel played a straightforward, rather daring game. There was an almost unbroken record of victories for the brother and sister; yet the doctor was a good player, a fine player!

It was Fair's secret, unavowed ambition to play whist sometimes with Miss Letty. Miss Letty was not young; indeed she was distinctly old, being ten years the senior of the Colonel, who owned fifty-four—fourteen years longer at the game of life than the doctor. She was a pretty, plump, cheerful little gentlewoman, who didn't look a day older than fifty, and wore dainty black dresses and a widow's cap. The widow's cap and a little diamond ring were the only outward signs of Miss Letty's romance. For ten years she had been betrothed to a young Scotsman, whose father had so deeply offended her brother that it took ten years and the young lover's conspicuous gallantry in the army to soften old Colonel Barnes' resentment; and then, instead of her lover, there came to Letty only a word of farewell scrawled on her own photograph, and the story of a gallant death out in India.

The doctor believed in her grief as he believed in her friendship or her brother's. She was not one to change old friends for new. Yet, this was the barb of the sting, here was Miss Letty, when her nephew, home from college for his holidays, fell ill, importuning his mother to send to Memphis for a doctor. He had attended Arthur on several occasions, and liked the young fellow greatly. To have another doctor called for Arthur was like a blow between the eyes. Yet this is what had happened; he heard it just now from the old butler whom he had met.

And this doctor, this distinguished physician, was Phil Martin!

John Fair was returning from a visit to Widow Little's boy and was passing the station when the train came in. He knew Phil instantly, for all the flesh he had put on, and the brown beard. But he was obliged to mention his own name before Dr. Martin recognised him; then to be sure, he mustered a cordial smile and shook John's hand warmly.

"One of the pleasures I've counted on in coming to this—coming here, has been getting a glimpse of you, old man," he smiled as he spoke—Phil Martin's old, jovial, complacent smile. "You're coming with me, I suppose?"

"Not this morning," John stammered. He felt the blood pumping into his heart in a hot gush of mortification; he knew it coloured his cheek. Martin was cordial—offensively cordial, it appeared to the doctor, whose nerves were unstrung. He kept harking back to the doctor's own history; and turned him off almost roughly.

Martin's eyes gravely roamed over the not very cheerful surroundings and then back to the carriage of the Barnes' and the sleek horses—a queer contrast to the surroundings; last of all to the doctor's old Calline patiently waiting untied, for her master. A flicker of some keener feeling lit his shrewd grey eyes.

"You were born hereabouts, weren't you, John?" he said in a gentle tone.

"He pities me, confound him!" thought the country doctor.

"My father had a farm ten miles down the river," he answered shortly.

"Must be a very pretty country in summer," Martin observed suavely; and again John resented his evident desire to be civil.

John helped the distinguished physician into the carriage and bade him good-bye. There was talk of seeing each other soon again, but no mention of the patient, no medical inquiries. Plainly the new doctor recognised that he was the only responsible party in the case; there wasn't even a fiction of a consultation. So the carriage drove away, and John climbed up on old Calline and went at his own pace home.

His reflections did not brighten as he went along. When a man is young, he has the possibility of better things always at his elbow; and in himself is an illimit-

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able vista of hope. There is no telling what he may not do. His dreams betoken his power, he fancies; and he picks himself up after every fall, convinced that he knows a new trick that will fling the jade Fortune at the next tussle. But after fifty, a man of sense has lost, among other illusions, the illusion of his own capacity. He has discovered his own limitations, and there is no drearier discovery.

"I'm the failure of the class," groaned John again, as he alighted at his own door. He had to call several times before Uncle Bob, Maggie's husband, could summon resolution to tear himself from the kitchen fire and shuffle out in the yard. The doctor did not reprove him; he walked stiffly up the steps, stumbling on the last, which was broken. In fact, it had been broken for a month. Half-a-dozen times had the doctor spoken to the old man about it; but the days when he spoke Bob had had a pain in his back, and the days when Bob did not have the pain the doctor hadn't spoken. He was about to give vent to his annoyance, in a torrent of angry words, when he saw the old man's penitent look, and remembered how often he had tramped miles in the mud to fetch books and papers for his master. Then the old man's wife hurried forward with a note that had been sent by Miss Letty Barnes.

The doctor's fingers shook a little as he opened the paper.

"It's confoundedly chilly," he muttered. Then he read:

"Dear Doctor.—Arthur was going to take this to you, and tell you something at the same time; but he caught a cold and I've begged him to stay in to-day. I think you had better come over to look at him as a physician, as well as a friend. He has no fever, and I have succeeded in persuading him to wear a continuous mustard plaster to-day. Please come as soon as you get this. After you have looked at Arthur perhaps you will do us a kindness. It is this, Arthur wanted to tell you. You know I hinted that he was interested deeply in a young Oxford lady whom he met while at college. Being his confidant, I cannot do more than hint. I know, my dear friend, that you will be rejoiced to know that our boy's romance has prospered. He brings tidings that she has accepted him; and it is his future father-in-law who is to come to pay us a visit to-day. I shall not tell you his name now, but save that for a pleasant surprise. Please come as soon as possible, and arrange to come back to supper and spend the night. We may have some whist!

"Very sincerely your attached old friend,
"Letitia Mainwaring Barnes."

The doctor whirled on his heel; his face was the face of a young man; his eyes were shining. Old Maggie held up her hand in surprise and he laughed.

"I've a very dear old friend, whom I knew years ago, to see at the Barnes's," he called. "Old Calline must get out again, but it's nearly two miles.

"Why did that idiot of a coachman tell me that cock-and-bull story?" he added to himself. "A fine mess he has made of things."

The doctor rode along far more briskly than he had ridden before that afternoon. He had made his best toilet, he sat erect in the saddle. At least, his old friends had not meant to wound him; worldly success or failure were of lesser account to that unworldly soul! "After all, I did cure the folks," he consoled himself, "and that's something."

Yet a sense of his failure remained in a corner of his consciousness and lent a touch of embarrassment to his greeting when he met Martin again. He had seen Arthur, who had nothing worse than a bronchial cold and was already on the mend, and disposed to apologise for not having braved the rain. "Aunt Letty sent old Nelson before I knew it," he laughed.

"Your aunt is always right," said John, and he passed on into the other room and Martin's presence. They were alone for a minute. Martin wrung his hand.

"Perhaps I shall not get the chance to say it, John," he said hurriedly—was there an unexpected warmth in his tone? "Look here, old fellow, what have you been doing here?"

"Nothing much, just vegetating and trying to kill as few of my confiding patients as possible." John stammered. He felt his sense of failure returning to him.

"I should say so," said Martin; "I've been hearing of you from the ladies and Arthur and other people. I know how you are responsible for not even the babies getting a chance to die hereabouts, and how you will get up in the night and ride ten miles for an old woman who can't give you even——"

"Strange to say, folks who haven't even a penny want to go on living," interrupted John, feebly jocular, and not knowing how to take Martin, who seemed almost excited.

"Confound it, while the rest of us have been trying to make money, you have been a missionary without expecting to save your soul by it! I know who is responsible for that little town over there actually having a drainage system. I know who sends the wine and the nourishment that he prescribes to his patients. There was an old man in the train who couldn't talk of you and keep his voice straight; he said you had saved his wife and made his daughter's last days easy! And all this while, in this desolate place where you hardly have a soul to throw a professional word to, you have kept at your studies and observations. You know——?" He named a great German doctor—"Well, he is over here. I saw him, last week; he was anxious to know about you. Your articles on hemorrhagic fever and your discoveries about the pneumonia-germ, he says are wonderful, wonderful!"

"Don't talk about discoveries," begged John, red and hot and ready to perspire with his embarrassment, "it is only a—a guess at the truth; the toxine has worked well; but it is only a surmise, a mere surmise, not yet ascertained. When I think of Koch—don't for goodness sake talk of discoveries, only my experiments."

"I tell you they are—big—big! You can call them what you please. And here you are lost in this place, and yet going on, never discouraged! At least, I know a man of genius, a real man of science when I see him. John, you're the success of the class!"

John gasped; and, as he caught at the nearest excuse for composure, Miss Letty came in.

"We are to have whist after supper," said she, smiling, "and Dr. Martin has asked sister Elly. I fear you will have to put up with me, Dr. Fair."

And it may be added here, that in spite of Dr. Martin's club game, Miss Letty justified all the doctor's hope, and he played the game of his life.

And when he had retired Martin spoke to Arthur about him.

"He's a man of genius," he cried—"no—he's a child!"

MARGARET PINE.

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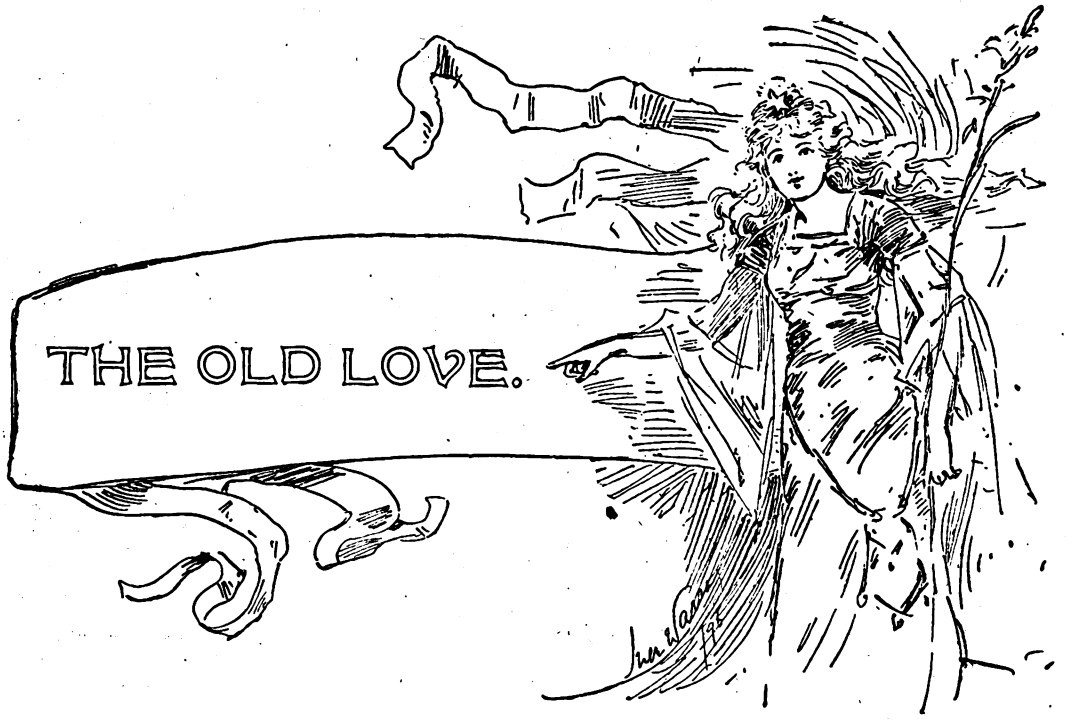

For nearly ten years Drixie had been carving on the trees a fanciful design of his own contriving—a heart, in outline, with a sort of *plus* sign cut in the middle. It looked more like a religious symbol than anything else—a mystic emblem carved by some mediæval hermit quite out of place in this age.

But to Drixie it had quite another signification. It was a love token, little less than an open declaration in this youth's own estimation. And, indeed, it was open enough to those who knew him. For Drixie's proper name was Henry Hart, "Drixie" being a pet name, and hers was Jennie Cross, so the riddle was easily read. He was scarcely twelve then. Now he was a well-grown man, and not an unattractive specimen, either, but that boyish trick of carving his emblem upon the trees had persisted, too, until one dreamy afternoon Stella Gaylaird floated into Woodvale and began the upsetting of all its traditions. Then the suffering chestnuts and beeches obtained a respite.

How Jennie Cross had regarded the hieroglyphic propensities of her eccentric admirer is not definitely known. It is probable that of late years they had caused her some mortification of spirit, but there is no manner of doubt that she was far more deeply annoyed at their sudden cessation. Although she had never formally accepted Drixie—for except through the medium of his jack-knife he had never proposed—she had very naturally come to regard his devotion as one of her belongings. That she rather liked him, in spite of odd ways, was evident enough. At school they helped each other, on holidays they had many a romp together, and since they had grown to an age demanding more ceremony, he was her constant escort to "parties" of every description. The gossips had long ago decided that it was a "match," and their comments were singularly free from disapproval. Drixie's freaks were still a favourite topic, but both these young folks were generally liked.

The gossips however, struck quite another note when Stella appeared and all the young men went trailing after her, Drixie leading the van; yet I doubt that the faithless lover suffered half as much from their caustic criticisms as did poor Jennie from their outspoken sympathy. "What difference does it make to me," she protested, almost tearfully, but in vain.

Stella was a town girl and an interloper. For my own part, I can't admit that she was Jennie's equal in beauty, but she was distractingly pretty, and she had that wonderful gift of fascination which in most cases avails far more than beauty uninspired. If her golden hair was less abundant than Jennie's dark tresses, it was done up with more "style." If her features were less regular they were charmingly piquant. If her eyes had less depth and earnestness they were full of animation, and that her conversation was the brightest ever heard in Woodvale is out of the question. This last, which rather daunted the rest of her infatuated train, was to Drixie the greatest attraction of all; and this appreciation won him if not her heart at least considerable favour.

That poor Drixie made a pitiable spectacle of himself, and furnished the local gossips with plenty of choice material, must be conceded. Ultimately he made himself a nuisance, and had to be snubbed. All through the autumn he took Miss Stella out driving as often as she would consent to go; and for a time she found the brown country roads, winding amid wooded hills aglow with the rich fruit-tints of the ripening leaves, exceedingly alluring, and often gladdened Drixie's heart with her exclamations of delight. After the snow came they had a ride or two, but now Stella's manner was growing as cold as the winter air, and Drixie's sensitive heart was chilled.

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He continued, nevertheless, to ring the door bell of her uncle's dwelling with unabated persistency, more and more frequently finding the young lady out. Finally he took advantage of her birthday very cleverly, as he fancied, to send her a present — a trinket of considerable value. His present was promptly returned. Then he called.

Stella was not at home—out for a ride with one of his rivals, he suspected. The next day, by the merest chance, he overheard her talking to a young fellow and laughing at him. He returned to his home in bitter wrath and ground the discarded jewel under his boot heel. For an hour he paced up and down his room, suffering torments of disappointment, rage and jealousy. At last there came a sudden revulsion of feeling.

He burst into tears, and his whole heart turned back with a passionate throb to Jennie. He longed as he had never longed for anything in the whole world before for her gentle sympathy, her comforting love. He hastened to her home. She was out—gone for a short walk, they told him, rather coldly. He ascertained the direction she had taken, however, and fairly ran along the road to overtake her.

Presently he noticed footprints, which some instinct told him were hers, leading aside into a little grove. He floundered through the snow, and soon found her standing beside an oak-tree. On its bark, obscured by years of growth and rusty with weathering, he saw his own boyish symbol—the big heart with the little cross cut within it—one of the first he had ever carved.

"Jennie! Jennie!" he cried.

The wretched girl was so glad to see him that she forgot all and held out her hand. He seized it and dropped on his knees in the snow.

"Oh, Jennie! Do you really love me so?"

The soft blush of welcome which was dawning upon her cheek flamed into angry scarlet, which spread and deepened till brow and ears and throat were all ablaze. Hot tears streamed from her eyes. She snatched away her hand and fled homeward, nor by his utmost efforts was he able to overtake her.

So he wandered along the village streets, bewildered and disconsolate, until the perversity of fate and his own marvellous aptitude for blundering again betrayed him. He saw some flowers displayed in the front window of one of the shops, a few pink carnations; but it suddenly occured to the woe begone Drixie that it might be a good idea to send these as a peace offering to the offended maiden.

The more he thought of it the more the ingenuity and delicate tact of the scheme impressed him. So he bought the flowers at a price that was sheer robbery on the dealer's part, and subsidised the assistant to deliver them. Upon the card which was to accompany them he wrote, "Dear Jennie, I am so sorry. Please forgive me, and don't take it so badly. I'll call to-morrow."

Then he went home, feeling almost elated. Now it happened that Jennie had given considerable attention to the "Language of Flowers," and she knew that pink carnations meant "Woman's love."

Bitterly self-conscious and burning with mortification she attributed to the unlucky Drixie a minuteness of knowledge and a subtlety of purpose which were as far from being his as was the hardness of heart with which she also credited him.

"He is returning me my love," she moaned. The unhappy worded note fully confirmed her in this opinion. It seemed to the proud girl a last humiliation, and she passed the night in fits of sobbing almost hysterical in their violence. When Drixie called the next morning she would not see him.

The months that followed were the most miserable that Drixie had ever known. He felt abominably ill-used. He adjured the society of all women, dark or fair, but found small comfort in that. He heard of Stella's departure without a pang, but when he thought of Jennie and how he had for ever forfeited her love, and even her friendship, he felt as if his heart would break.

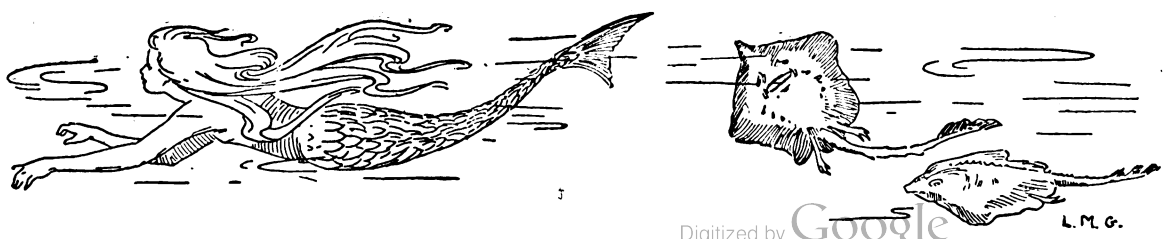
So he tried to forget his woes in close application to study, and did long and reckless bicycle rides across the country. If he could keep his heart pumping hard enough, it didn't seem to ache so cruelly.

One evening he was riding in a heedless fashion that had become habitual with him, down the steep grade that wound like a corkscrew round the precipitous sides of a hill. On the left was a perpendicular cutting; on the right was a sheer drop of several feet and below it a rugged slope obstructed by trees and stumps. Suddenly, about half way down, he perceived that the repairer had been at work on the side of the road next the cutting, and had set up a temporary fence to prevent vehicles from driving into an excavation which they had opened there, leaving a narrow track on the outer edge. And in the middle of this track, riding towards him with uncertain movements and obvious lack of confidence, he saw another cyclist. It was a girl—it was Jennie Cross. All this flashed before him in a moment. His speed was beyond control; there was not an instant for deliberation—scarcely time to act. He gave a sharp wrench to the right, his machine leapt from the verge, he felt himself hurled through the air like a sling-stone—then a stunning concussion, and all was dark and silent.

* * * * *

A few weeks later the young man was lying on a cot in a darkened room, slowly recovering. Jennie had just been allowed to enter—for the first time since the accident. She was holding his hand; her eyes were cast down in deep humility; her face was flushed, but sweetly resolute. "Drixie," she said, in a voice that hardly broke the silence, "Drixie dear, it was simply horrid of you to ask me that way—but I do."

H. T. D.



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STORIES OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

UNEARTHED AND RE-EDITED BY ROBERT MACHRAY.

No. 6.

ROTHSCHILD OUTWITTED.

ONE day about the middle of October, 1822, a large number of the brokers and dealers had gathered themselves together in little groups in and about the Stock Exchange.

To the casual eye, these gentlemen appeared to be conversing in their ordinary tones about nothing in particular, but when they were watched more closely, it was quite evident, from their furtive glances and other indications, that they were the victims of some excitement, some anxiety they were endeavouring to suppress.

The news had passed through Capel Court that Rothschild was "bearing" the market, and that as a consequence the price of the funds was slowly but sensibly being lowered. It was well known that the great financial magnate never entered into any transaction without having abundant reason for doing so.

The sources from which he obtained the information he acted upon were so numerous and excellent, and the influence he exercised throughout the whole of Europe by means of his connection with his brothers in Paris, Vienna, Naples, and elsewhere, was so tremendous, that his operations upon 'Change had a significance possessed by those of no other man.

"What then had happened?"

This was the question men were putting to each other—each one as cautiously as he could. The object of each one was to try to find out what his neighbour knew without letting him know whether he were better informed or not. This business of getting something and giving nothing in return, is one that is practised all the world over in some form or other, but nowhere so skilfully and so persistently as upon the Stock Exchange.

It soon became apparent to those who could read the signs that nothing, so far as was known, had occurred to lead Rothschild to take a pessimistic view of affairs on the Continent, which were then engaging the attention of the English people.

Still there the fact was. Brokers who were the recognised agents of Nathan Meyer were openly selling large quantities of consols and other high-class securities. Some said that half a million of the funds had been already disposed of; others were certain that the sales of Government stock, which had already been effected that morning, came to two or three times that amount.

Just as lions have their jackals, so the kings of finance have their own special dependants and hangers-on, eagerly waiting for some tit-bit of information, some tip or hint upon which to go, or, in despite of anything better, only too anxious to follow in the trail of these great men, and to do in their own small way what their masters were doing on a larger scale.

Thus, upon this occasion, a considerable number of the dealers, seeing how things were obviously going, also sold the funds; these again in their turn influenced others. The movement spread, the knots of men who had so far been discussing the matter with such quietness as we have noticed, broke up in some confusion; bad news of some sort was looked for; something like a panicky feeling began to prevail, the result being that at the close of the day there had been a drop of from two to three per cent. in the general list.

Nor did the following morning show any improvement. No intelligence of disaster had been received, but, on the other hand, neither had there been anything of a favourable character. The selling movement was continued without any marked attempt at checking it,

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and the public getting wind that something was wrong, sold a large amount of their genuine holdings, a circumstance which, of course, increased the depression in the market.

All that day Rothschild sat in his office, a cold, unemotional, inscrutable figure. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate the great wealth and power of the man, but the rigid pose, the dead colour of the face, the studied blankness of the eyes, the whole air of astonishing indifference to everything and everybody, the indescribable callousness and hardness of this remarkable being were sufficiently extraordinary and characteristic.

Every few minutes a visitor would be announced, and then would come in. Suddenly the whole aspect of the man would change and blaze with energy. When the newcomer had communicated his message, telling what was the price at the moment of the Funds, and the names of the parties who were buying and selling, question after question would be asked of him with lightning-like rapidity—questions so keen and so comprehensive that the whole ground was covered, the entire position analysed and grasped in a moment.

Never appearing on the Stock Exchange in person, and generally acting, when any great coup was being worked, through brokers different from those usually employed by him, no inkling of his real plans was ever betrayed to any of his subordinates. In former days some had presumed to think that they understood him, but they had soon been undeceived by some lesson which he contrived to make exceeding bitter and—expensive to them.

Here was a man who was infinitely able to keep his own counsel, having learnt very early in life that one of the chief uses of speech was to create confusion and conceal what his intentions were. He was feared; he was hated; but no one affected to despise or ignore him. He was their master, and they knew it.

Brokers had planned and plotted against him times without number, but the victory had nearly always been with him.

Now, when he had got the market exactly to the point at which he wished to have it through these late operations of his, there was no trace of satisfaction or pleasure to be seen on his countenance. This, in any case, was the nature of the man, but just at the moment he was in some little doubt how to proceed. All that day he had been expecting couriers from abroad, but as yet they had not come.

Late in the afternoon Rothschild returned to his house at Stamford Hill—a locality at that time considerably affected by members of the Stock Exchange. Close upon midnight a carriage and four drove up to his gate, and two figures, closely muffled up, issued from the coach, and after some slight delay were admitted into the mansion.

Rothschild had retired to bed, but as soon as he knew the names of his nocturnal visitors, he rose and dressed. Presently the three were closeted together.

Opposite to the house of Mr. Rothschild stood the residence of another wealthy dealer on 'Change. This gentleman, a Mr. Herbert, had that night been out at a friend's house, where he had formed one of the not least hilarious of a very hilarious party. As he drew near his own residence, he noticed the carriage and four standing before the gate of the great Hebrew financier. His attention was at once aroused by what he knew to be a very unusual sight, and, as often happens, the wine he had taken, instead of rendering him less acute, had rather tended to sharpen his intelligence.

Descending from his coach, he told his driver to await him some distance away in the shelter of a high wall, the shadow of which hid the carriage from view. Taking advantage of the cover given him by the darkness, he crept stealthily close up to the entrance of the Rothschild grounds, and there, unobserved, waited patiently to see if he could find out what was the meaning of this late visit to his neighbour's place.

An hour passed in this manner, and Herbert was beginning to think that after all no particular meaning was to be attached to the presence of the coach and four. He was just about to return to his own carriage, when he heard steps approaching. A minute more, and he beheld Rothschild accompanied by two men who were unknown to him, and who were wrapped up in such a way as to conceal their features, come through the gate and step into the carriage.

"To the City," was the order given by Rothschild to the driver.

"Something afoot—something very important indeed," Herbert murmured to himself. "This is no ordinary business. How am I to discover what it is?"

Then there came into his mind—probably born of the wine whose influence he still felt, a somewhat daring plan. He considered the matter for a brief space, for it was necessary to act quickly if he were to succeed in carrying out the stratagem by which he hoped to be as wise as Rothschild himself, and resolved to attempt it.

When he reached his own carriage, the coachman was fast asleep, and was roused with some difficulty. Having told him the direction in which the carriage he desired to follow had gone, he promised him a considerable reward if he should catch it up sufficiently to keep it in sight without himself being perceived; and here luck befriended him, so that when Rothschild had reached the street in which the banker's office was situated, Herbert was not far behind, and could easily see where the other was going with his companions.

Telling his driver to stop, Herbert got out, and sent his carriage back to the stable. Though Herbert had undoubtedly been to some extent under the influence of his potations when he had left the convivial party, his long wait in the night air had certainly sobered him completely, and yet scarcely had his man driven away than it appeared that Herbert was very drunk indeed.

Never was there a drunker man. He lurched about

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from side to side, he reeled to and fro, he sang a snatch of a ribald song, he broke it off to shout aloud a loyal toast. In a word, he was so royally and mortally intoxicated that the wonder was that he did not fall in a heap, comatose and helpless, in the street.

The few people he met gave him but scant notice. It was a time when men drank deep, and their revels, when in the condition that Herbert was, excited no more than a good-natured smile or a half-indulgent oath. So when Herbert came staggering along, they passed him by with indifference.

Yet if anyone had watched his movements carefully, they would have seen that the drunken man was acting with a good deal of method.

Notwithstanding his reeling and lurching, he made his way as far as the office of Nathan Rothschild, and with a hoarse drunken scream knocked upon the door. Then, without further ceremony, he went in, to be met by the housekeeper, who was coming along the hall-way to see what the matter was.

When she saw this wild, dishevelled figure of a man, and realised the state in which he was, she broke into a great cry of terror. Yelling to her at the top of his voice to get out of his way, and heedless of the fright in which she was, he made as though he would push her aside. She, however, took hold of his arm, and began timidly to remonstrate with him.

For a moment Herbert seemed to yield. His face was turned towards the still open door. Then, as if changing his mind, he swung her somewhat roughly aside, uttering at the same time the most extraordinary Bacchanalian oaths. Knowing the exact position of Rothschild's particular den in the building, he at once made his way to it with many a stagger, each one of which seemed likely to be his last.

Meanwhile the housekeeper strove to hinder him from opening the door of the special chamber devoted to her master's use, and which he knew to be occupied at that very moment by Rothschild himself and the two men who had come with him only a short time before.

Putting her aside with some force, Herbert succeeded in entering Rothschild's private office, and no sooner had his foot crossed the threshold than, after swaying unsteadily about, as if in a vain effort to gain some degree of composure, he fell down flat on the floor, insensible and like one dead.

Behind the fallen man appeared the housekeeper, her face pale with vexation, fear, and horror.

"He's drunk," she gasped, "dead drunk."

"What is all this?" sternly demanded Rothschild, who had risen from his chair. His cheeks, too, were pallid. Master as he was of men, and of millions of money, there was always in his breast the haunting dread of assassination. He felt himself strong enough to provide against everything—but death. "Who is this?" he cried, pointing to the figure as it lay prone before him.

"He opened the door," protested the poor woman, "before I reached it—I'd heard him knock. Then he came in from the street, without as much as by your leave, or saying, 'What's your business.' I tried to restrain him, and to talk him over, so that he might go out quietly. But he thrust me aside, and I could do nothing with him."

She paused, and looked at her employer, whose appearance now indicated that that terrible fear which so often oppressed him was passing away.

"He is beside himself with wine," she continued. "He did not know what he was doing when he came in any more than he does now," she cried with hysterical tears.

"Opened the door, did he?" exclaimed Rothschild.

"Yes," she replied.

"But why was the door not locked?" demanded Rothschild.

"You came in yourself last, sir," she answered, "and you called to me not to mind as you entered."

"True. Well, what is to be done?" he asked. "We must do something for the man. He can't be left lying here in this condition. Yet he can hardly be thrust out into the street,—that might be the end of him. Who is it, I wonder?"

Meanwhile the two men who had come from Stamford Hill with Rothschild had looked on without saying a word. Now when Rothschild approached the drunken man, who was lying on his face full-length on the floor, they rose from their seats to assist him, and showed a lively wonder in this strange scene.

"You English people are curious people," said one of them, speaking with a marked foreign accent.

"You must not judge them by this," said Rothschild. "Who is it—let us see if I know him."

Taking hold of Herbert's body, he tried to turn it over to see if he could recognise the face. This he managed to do with some difficulty. He knew it at once.

"Herbert!" he exclaimed in amazement. "This is the most extraordinary thing."

"You know him, then?" said one of his visitors.

"Know him? Of course, I do. He is not only a well-known dealer on the Stock Exchange, but his house is not more than a stone's throw from my own. But, to speak the truth, I had no idea he was this kind of man. The amazing thing is that he should be down here in the city at this time of night. I cannot understand it."

In the meantime, he had been trying to get the inanimate form of the man into a sitting posture,—a process for which he required the help of the housekeeper. But for his sterterous breathing, Herbert might have been dead,—so utterly unconscious was he.

"After all," said Rothschild, "I think I know, perhaps, how this has come about. There are many queer clubs in London—night hawks, ghostly prowlers, and Herbert must belong to one of them. That, no doubt, is it."

Suddenly, even as Rothschild spoke, Herbert seemed to slip out of their hands, the back of his head striking the floor with a dull thud, while his face took on a deep purple hue, and his body stretched out tense and rigid.

Rothschild and his friends were fast becoming

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seriously alarmed. Herbert's drunken fit now seemed to them likely to end in apoplexy or some sudden seizure, which might have a fatal termination.

"Is there no quiet room to which he can be removed," asked one of the strangers.

"He should be put to bed and a physician sent for," said the other.

"This is the most comfortable room in the house," said Rothschild, "and as you can see for yourselves, it is none too comfortable."

"You are indeed a Spartan," said the man who had spoken first, with a half satirical smile. Rothschild's office was furnished with the utmost simplicity.

"Have you any brandy?" Rothschild now asked of the housekeeper.

Some spirits were brought in a glass, and an attempt was made to force the fluid between Herbert's set teeth, but in vain. Nothing apparently was of the slightest use.

"Perhaps you had better go for a doctor," said Rothschild to the woman.

"Let us try the effect of a bucket of water on him first," she suggested, and without waiting to hear his reply, went off to fetch it. A minute or two later, while Rothschild was apologising to his guests for the unseemly interruption which their business had suffered, she returned, and without more ado soused Herbert well with the water.

At first this drenching did not appear to affect Herbert's condition, but in the course of a short time the patient began to breathe in a more natural manner, and then fell into a somewhat noisy but sound sleep. Two or three rugs and a pillow were brought into the room, and Herbert was made as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

His anxiety for Herbert now being calmed, Rothschild said with a grim smile, "When Herbert comes to himself, and realises where he is, he will never forgive himself."

"That will depend on circumstances," said Herbert to himself under the rugs. "I wish, however, I was not so confoundedly wet."

"Now, señor," said Rothschild pointedly, to the taller of the two men, "I think you can tell me now, as fully as you possibly can, what intelligence you have brought me from Madrid."

In this year of grace, 1822, the famous compact which had bound the Holy Alliance, as it was called, together, was seen to be coming to an end. The British Government had been forced to the conclusion that it could be no party to the Absolutist views which were cherished by the sovereigns of Russia, Austria, Prussia, and France—views which completely rejected all liberal institutions, and were only satisfied by the most thorough-going despotism.

The problem before the Holy Alliance was: What was to be done with Spain and the revolted Spanish colonies in South America?

At this time the Spanish people were far from being well-disposed to their king, Ferdinand, whom Europe sought to impose upon them. They protested that they were entitled to select the form of government that suited them best without any interference on the part of anyone outside their own country. To a certain extent they were backed up in this attitude by Great Britain.

France had called upon the allied monarchs to re-establish the despotism of Ferdinand, and had gone so far as to assemble a considerable army on the slopes of the Pyrenees.

Such was the state of things when the Duke of Wellington was sent as plenipotentiary to the Continental monarchs, and he was frankly told in Paris that 100,000 French troops had been mobilised; one column was to pass into the country through Catalonia, while the other was to march by the great road through Irun upon Madrid.

A week before the time when Rothschild had met his two visitors, the duke had let it be known that he had practically failed in his efforts to keep the French king quiet. He had then gone on to Vienna, where a great congress was expected to be held.

What Rothschild was anxious to know from his Spanish visitors was what the attitude would be of the Spaniards if a French army invaded their country. To his questions on this point he received the reply that the leaders of the revolution were jealous of each other, and that it was tolerably certain that their rivalries would render the work of the French very easy.

He had also brought a letter in cipher from one of Rothschild's most trusted correspondents, who looked after his business in the Peninsula, stating that a French occupation would be a matter of little consequence, as the Spanish people were uneasy and restless, and, on the whole, would prefer a more settled form of government than that they now had.

Rothschild's second visitor was from Paris, and had been sent across the Channel by the brother who was the head of that branch of the Rothschild family.

After some conversation as to the position of affairs in France at the time, it transpired that the French Government had been asking in an informal manner if the Rothschilds would be willing to float a loan for a large sum of money, the understanding being that it was to be used in the Spanish campaign for the restoration of Ferdinand. Otherwise, the French troops would not cross the mountains.

"There will be no loan," said Rothschild shortly, "for any such purpose."

He drew towards him some writing materials, and wrote a brief letter, which he gave to the French courier.

"So far as we are concerned there shall be no war," said Rothschild. "Money is no longer to be made out of war."

As anyone who is acquainted with history must be well aware, what Rothschild said was not fulfilled. Spain was occupied, but that did not take place for a considerable time later, and the circumstances which led the Rothschilds to advance the necessary funds in the end to the French king lie outside the domain of this narrative.

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For the present the key-note of the occasion was that there was to be no war in Spain. That very morning this would be announced in such a way that confidence would be restored upon the Stock Exchange, and the result would be that, as always happened in such cases, there would be a marked rise in Consols and every other class of security.

Before dismissing his visitors, he sent out to the housekeeper to call a carriage.

"You will drive back to my house," he said to them when it had arrived, "and you will tell my people to go across to my brother-in-law, Montefiore, and ask him to come to me at once. Say the business is most important, and will admit of no delay."

When they had gone, he sat for awhile wrapt in thought. Then, regardless of the sleeping figure, whose presence there he had almost forgotten, he commenced to speak to himself aloud.

"It will be some hours before the Stock Exchange can learn the news I shall give it. If I let it be known after noon, that will be quite time enough. As soon as the Exchange opens, I will have Montefiore and a host of other brokers employed in picking up all the stock they can get without disturbing the market."

He was as calm, as impassive as ever. At this sort of game, he was endlessly proficient. That his gains should be made out of the losses of others disturbed him not in the least. Though he believed himself to be entirely alone, as it was shown by this soliloquy, no one would have marked anything unusual in his demeanour.

After all, he was only using his money and brains against the money and brains of others, who would have only been too glad to have been able to act as he did.

Two or three hours sped away. It was now nearly daylight, and he grew very anxious over the delay of the appearance of his most trusted broker. He reckoned up in his mind the time it should have taken for his message to have been delivered and responded to, and came to the conclusion that some accident had occurred. After waiting a short time longer, he determined to go himself as fast as possible on the way to Stamford Hill, taking the road along which he was sure his brother-in-law must come.

Hardly had the door closed behind Rothschild when Herbert showed some symptoms of recovering. After her master had gone out, the housekeeper entered the room to see how her patient was getting on. She found him sitting up, and, although he still presented a most haggard appearance, he appeared to be coming to himself.

"How do you feel, sir?" she asked.

"Oh, I think I am all right," responded Herbert. "Although I am perfectly distracted with a violent headache. But where am I? What has happened! This is certainly not my own house."

"You are in the office of Mr. Rothschild," she said.

"In Mr. Rothschild's office," he exclaimed. "How did I get here?"

The housekeeper smiled.

"Well, sir, when you came here last night you were hardly aware of what you were doing."

"Oh, I see," he said. "I must have had too much wine at the club last night. I am afraid I have given you a great deal of trouble," and he rose up and stood on his feet. "I must be going," he said, and he handed her a couple of guineas. "Let that pay you for your trouble."

The housekeeper tried to expostulate with him. He really ought to rest a little longer, for he was not well enough to go out. But he was resolved, he said, and presently went out into the street, where the air was so fresh and bracing that not only did he at once lose all signs of his headache, but in a remarkably short space of time had managed also to present something uncommonly like his ordinary appearance.

As he went along he smiled pleasantly to himself. "Never was there such a chance," he said, in his gayest manner. "Rothschild will never forgive me, but if I work matters properly, his forgiveness will not matter a bit to me."

Next he went to an early coffee house, where he made a hearty breakfast. Then he sauntered to the office of his principal broker, who was not a little surprised at so early a visit.

Nor was his surprise less when Herbert gave him instructions to buy as soon as the market had opened an enormous amount of the three and four per cents., as well as an equally large block of Omnium.

"I suppose you know what you are doing?" said the astonished broker. "The market has been very weak for the last two days. You must surely have heard something?"

"You may be quite certain of that," Herbert replied.

The broker did as he was ordered, and by eleven o'clock had fulfilled the whole of Herbert's commissions, and it was just about this time that Herbert met Rothschild, whom he asked satirically, "How are you off for stock?"

When Rothschild's brokers appeared in the market, a heavy rise in Consuls had already taken place, and while their actions, and the favourable news from abroad still further stimulated prices, the advantage lay with Herbert, who was able to sell in the afternoon of the same day the stock he had bought in the morning at a gain of from three to four per cent.

Rothschild never forgave Herbert for what he termed "a base, dishonest, and nefarious stratagem."

Great Cricket Competition

PRIZES OF £1,000, £100, £25.

In *Pearson's Weekly* now on sale appear particulars of a big competition in which the above substantial amounts are offered.

A list of fifteen matches appears, and all you have to do is to indicate which club you consider will win in the same way as the famous *Pearson's Weekly* Football Competitions.

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GREAT - WAR - COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE . . £5 | **25 Prizes of Handsome Books.**
Five Prizes of £1 each. | **25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.**

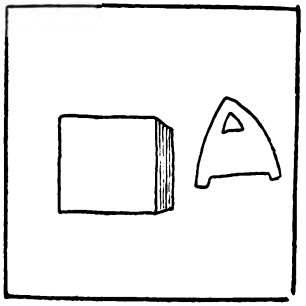
In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

TOO much interest is at the present moment centred in that part of the world round the unfortunate Island of Cuba, that the competition we have inaugurated, and which starts to-day, should commend itself particularly to readers of *Short Stories*.

Below will be found eight pictures. Each one depicts the name of some place, or ship, or man associated with the combatants. Five sets of these pictures will be published. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep all the sets by you until we ask you to send them in.

The daily newspapers will give you the best help in discovering solutions, as most of the names depicted have already appeared in the press.

THIS WILL HELP YOU.

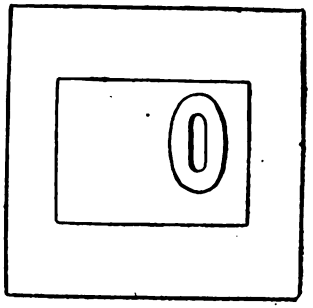


No. 1.—CUBA.

WARSHIP.

No. 2.....

LEADER.



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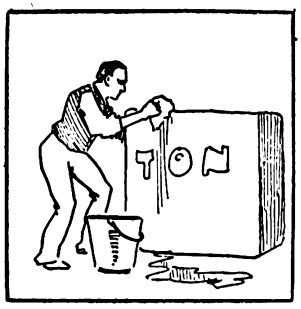
PLACE.



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WARSHIP.

No. 5.....

LEADER.

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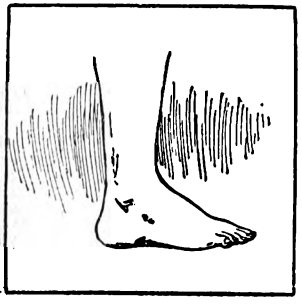
WARSHIP



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WAR COMPETITION.

No. 1.

Name.....

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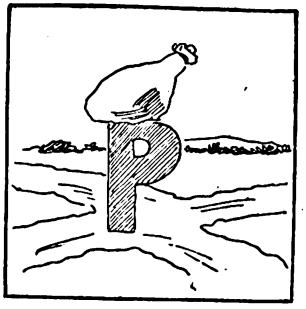

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THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

THE TALE OF THE YELLOW WAR

BY M. P. SHIEL.

CHAPTER XXVI. (*continued*).

By the time Hardy reached his own ship in No. 98, the three appointed battle-ships were off to the west.

It was just three bells, first dog-watch; and the day, as if lingering to see, showed hardly a tendency to darken. The Allied fleet was now much more distinctly marked on the horizon. The British had quite a stripped appearance, prepared, to its mast-heads, for battle.

As so n as Hardy reached his deck he ordered eight knots to be signalled. And at once the two masses of power began to approach rapidly, growing up upon each other, marching over to the insubstantial deep, to meet.

It is impossible for even the coolest heart to be present at the impending of a contest so august, without a quickened beat, a thump of awe. Even to contemplate the thing from afar is horror. The weak flesh shrinks. The forces that rush to horrid combat are hardly of man,—they stride out into the infinite, they reach the supernatural, they become *ghostly*. Commonplace Jack suddenly finds himself face to face with ineffable Hades.

They are ten miles apart—they are eight—they are six. The heart seems jammed in the dry throat, and the hands shake like reeds through which the huntsman's dog has flitted. The anticipation of the thing is, if possible, a greater horror than the reality.

The five ships have pricked their course off, debouching to port, and the three appointed torpedo-boats are rushing like sword-fish still further to port upon the single doomed ship designated by Hardy. Only the *Royal Sovereign* in the far starboard limb maintains her straight course to eastward. Hardy is in her conning-tower, and his eyes, alight with awe and joy, are everywhere.

Signal after signal goes up from the *Royal Sovereign*. The speeds on both sides intensify. She is five miles from the line of the two ships between which she means to run, and she is the foremost of her own fleet. In two minutes she is four miles; in two more three. How frightful is her Silence. . . . !

If the earth's foot should slip upon its course, and she were perceived to be sailing slowly, yet with ever swifter and madder joy, toward her native sun, just so the wild heart would beat, and the blanched face be pinched. . . .

The ships are no longer mere toys one to the other. They are two miles apart. Hardy waits, grandly patient. They are two thousand yards apart. . . . And then the *Royal Sovereign* talks.

Talks—and is answered. It is a single savage bark of Cerberus, the hell-dog, answered by two single savage Cerberus-barks—the talk of heavy guns. But before the sounds have passed in pallid flight over that sea, there breaks forth a continued rolling row, like that solemn roar of doom and deep-throated jabber of bubbering and thundering Etna, the mere intolerable tumult of which throws the crews into a sort of crazy daze. It is the lighter guns which chatter.

John Hardy forgets Yen How and his tortures. He is a youth again. A wild hilarity lights his gallant eyes.

But now he is passing midway between the two ships, and straight before him is the third. Not an instant of that precious period passes unmarked by him. Though his face, like all faces there, is the face of a madman, the back of his brain is cool as ice.

"Plenty of quick thunder," he had said—in his robust, Cromwellian way! And as he passed by her, the great *Brennus* reeled and plunged, with a sort of haste, from sight.

But now all the battle, over many a mile of troubled sea, is rolled in smoke; and nimble-treading clouds pass in mysterious haste to and fro across the water. From fifteen miles away to northward there comes a great detonation, and the *Italia* is "in the air." The three torpedo-boats detailed to attack her have been sunk, but the sixth steel-needle waits half a minute swinging between her screws, and bursts, and sends her—flying.

Near by, Lord Beresford on the *Anson*, has rammed the *Lepanto* at a triangle-apex, and run on with sinking bows toward the *Amiral Duperré* and the *Oldenburg;* and these two he passes with such a rain of wrath that not a single crew is left alive at their unprotected guns.

Now, if never before, is proved the truth of Hardy's saying, that the modern battleship is a destructive, rather than a self-protective, engine. Even as he gasps the sharp, short order "Ram!" the two masses of white cloud, within which are the *Royal Sovereign* and the *Francisco Morosimi* coalesce; they are both tearing along at fifteen knots, in nearly opposite directions; they close—they meet; and there is nothing on earth to which to liken the shocking jar with which those armoured powers crash.

On both ships every living brain spins and faints; and before any one has recovered consciousness, the *Francisco Morosimi* is wheeling furiously in a hollow basin of sea, whose waters shoot and gurgle in cataracts above her leaning hull.

All along the line of fifteen miles, from the *Italia* "in the air" to the *Francisco Morosimi* in the deep, the tale of tragedy has accumulated; and in three minutes the charge is over, and the ships are firing stern-guns.

Only three minutes—and at the end of that time, one British battle-ship, the *Illustrious*, and four foreign battle-ships, the *Italia*, the *Francisco Morosimi*, the *Lepanto*, and the Admiral-ship, are no longer there; seven minutes later, and nine more foreign battle-ships, with three more British, sink, without receiving any further injuries. Some of the crews of these last are afloat in boats.

Two of the six British ships in tatters, and six of the

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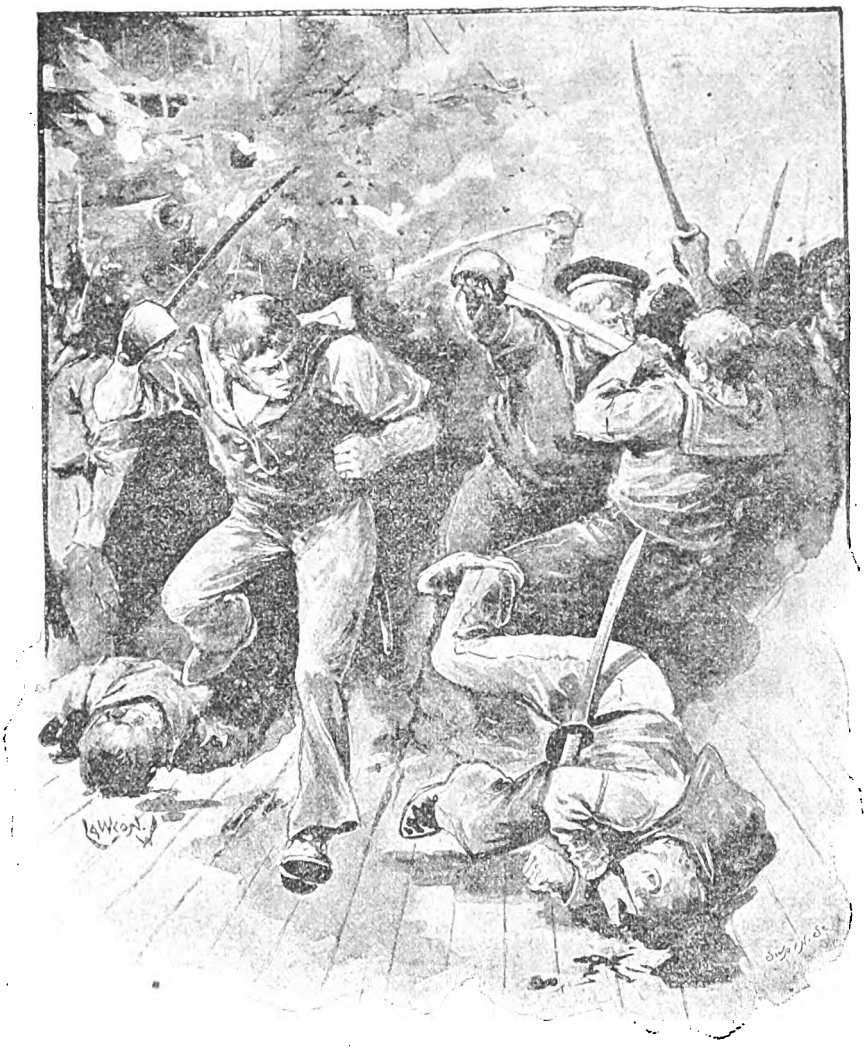
enemy in tatters, still float. John Hardy slowly opens his eyes, leaps to his feet, looks round, and orders his helm to be put to starboard, for there is a wide clear space about him. He is told, in reply, that it is impossible to keep steam, as the water is rising in the stoke-holds.

This only means that he cannot ram again, not that the fight is quite over for him. The *Royal Sovereign* creeps wearily round; yonder to the northwest is a still reeking ship, the *Sfax*, apparently hardly moving; and like a dying lion, intent upon dealing a last rent to his enemy, the *Royal Sovereign*, trailing her wounded stern, drags herself painfully forward upon the *Sfax*.

The ships are alone, and the combat, dreadful because almost stationary, lasts five minutes. Neither is fit for fight, yet neither will strike colours. The rain of shells clash midway in the air, and burst in unison, as if with clapping hands, and grand hurrahs of flame and sound. The ships are near, and suddenly Hardy cries: "Helm hard to port—hands prepare to board!" And as the *Sfax* discharges a last broadside at nothingness, the high bow of the *Royal Sovereign* creeps forward upon the quarter of the *Sfax*, there is a small crash and mutual shudder of the meeting ships, and the next moment, Jack, with Hardy at his head, is swarming, cutlass in hand, with nimble impetuosity, into the enemy's aft upper-deck. The feat is unexpected; the Frenchmen wince and die; in a moment the British tar is everywhere, and his touch is rough. A white-faced commodore rushes past Hardy on the main-deck, crying: "We yield! we yield!"



Swarming, cutlass in hand, with nimble impetuosity, into the enemy's aft upper-deck.

The stern of the *Sfax* sways and wobbles a little. She feels the suction of the *Royal Sovereign*, which has quietly sunk beside her.

Hardy stills the tumult, orders the French flag to be pulled down, and leaps to the conning-tower. He looks abroad with keenly curious eyes over the sea. Around him is a great dull roar, and the air is all of thin smoke. No human brain can now fully divine, much less direct, the vast drama that is still progressing. Far away, beyond the ken of vision, the battle is raging between meeting cruisers, between torpedoes and contre-torpilleurs, between shot and shell, ram and barbette, in incalculable hurly-burly. But through all this confusion there has run, and runs, a thread of plan, on at least one side. Hardy, as far as he can see, is well content.

He waits and waits, with wildly throbbing heart, for the appearance of his three battle-ships.

As for himself, he is a prisoner. The *Sfax* has neither screw, nor rudder, nor boat.

At last they come, hurrying from the eastward, where they have been delayed by sinking the greater part of the enemy's troopships—in line abreast.

Hardy's signalman has been busy among the French flags, and when they approach within a thousand yards of the *Sfax*, summoned by steam-syren, he signals them to destroy, or capture, the five dismantled battle-ships which remain.

And with this order the battle is nearly over: the mere apparition of the fresh ships has all but won it. There is a renewed energy of firing which lasts from four to five minutes.

And then a gradual, and finally deathly silence grows upon the dun air, and the callous green sea-surface; and night at last descends.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

The Yellow Danger.

We, writing the history, have gone into detail, and explained the means employed by Hardy in the winning of this great battle.. But the mass of the British public, not looking narrowly into means, looking only at the astonishing result, hailed the victory as a perplexing miracle of genius.

That even one of the British ships should return to harbour was marvellous. But that three should return, having in tow two Italian and one French ship, after destroying the whole overwhelming remainder of the invading force, this seemed to approach the incredible.

The three ships arrived at Portsmouth at eleven in the night. They were the *Nile*, the *Hero*, and a sloop, the *Pelican*. (The *Benbow*, the third of the ships kept by Hardy in reserve, had been torpedoed at the last moment.) They had on board, beside their own crews, Lord Beresford, Hardy, and a number of boatloads of British and foreign sailors which they had picked up. The three captured ships—the *Sfax*, and two Italian gun-boats, all disabled—were towed to Newhaven, and left. The three British, almost intact (the *Hero* had some central-battery guns unshipped) proceeded to Portsmouth.

At midnight there was a sound of jubilee bells in London, in Liverpool, and in every considerable town in Britain. Watch-night processions, which showed no intention of going to bed, filled the streets; and penniless Hodge at the door of the village ale-house heard a rumour, and was glad.

Better times would come now; hard Scarcity and dreary outlook would be no more; the great war was over; and the True Blue had won it.

But the real case was fearfully different. The war just practically ended was a preliminary: it was the first-piece comedietta before the tragedy, and it was put upon the stage by a great actor in order the better to set off his own grandiose strutting and storming. It was the streak of foam which fore-runs the tidal-wave.

If ever a man had a day of strain and toil it was John Hardy that day; with every breath his chest wheezed in labour; when he landed at Portsmouth at eleven, his hands hung so heavy that he could hardly stir them. His voice was gone. The sound of thunder still rang in his ears.

Yet, even while preparations were being made for a train to conduct him to London, he wrote, and had sent off, a telegram. It was to the editor of the *Times*. It said:

> Kindly reserve two columns for letter from me for to-morrow. Will let you have manuscript by three a.m.
>
> John Hardy.

At this message Printing House Square rubbed its tickled hands, and was prone to dance. The editorial head grew dizzy with big anticipation. For copy at that moment from John Hardy, two columns of it, was copy indeed—and gratis! It seemed too exquisite a thing to be true.

"But what can it be all about?" wondered the editor.

"A thrilling description of the battle!" suggested an inspired sub.

"Hardly that, perhaps," doubted the Chief.

One of the staff waited in Cavendish Square, which till far into the morning was filled by an upper-class crowd. A little before three the *Times* man drove from Hardy's door with the precious copy written in pencil; and not till then did Hardy's head drop asleep on the table where he had sat; part of the copy he had scribbled in the train with half-closed eyes.

The letter contained no thrilling description of the battle; though it was thrilling enough, too, and made the *Times* editor rub his eyes in a somewhat unusual way.

Was the letter a stupendous hoax? Or was it a letter, the publication of which would lift the *Times* to a greater pitch of glory than was ever dreamt of by human editor in this world before?

The *Times* man was questioned narrowly. From whom had he received the letter? From Hardy's old butler himself. There could be no mistake.

It appeared next morning, side by side with the detailed description of the battle. And England rubbed its eyes, too, as the *Times* editor had rubbed his.

Hardy had spoken out clearly, careless, in his belief in the British character, whether he threw the nation into a state of panic or not. He told what was coming; he explained the motive with which the European war had been brought about by Yen How; he told of the massacre, of the action of the Japanese fleet; he showed how there was not even the least possible chance for Europe; how England alone, for a time at least, was sheltered by her sea; and how this was the chance of England to come forward and prove her patriarchal heart, her imperial clemency, her motherhood of the world. He gave his reasons for thinking that the fulfilment of his prophecy was near, impending, about to happen. And he wound up with a series of numbered skeleton recommendations. They were:

1. That the tiny remainder of the British fleet be utilised to seize all the merchant-ships in European ports; and that these ships, together with all the available ships in the British mercantile marine, be employed, with or without the consent of foreign governments or individual owners, in bringing over to England, and in taking to America, and to Africa, such of the inhabitants of Europe as could and would seek shelter in those countries.
2. That America be invited to a League with Britain, having for its object the salvation of the white races, and the extermination of the yellow.
3. That the armies of Britain be at once recalled from the Continent.
4. That the Government at once begin to make all possible provision for the huge increase of population in Britain which would result on the appearance in Europe of the yellow men.

Such were the *Times* two-columns, and under the last was the name John Hardy.

Of the sensation which this letter caused it is impossible to give a real idea, for there is nothing else to which to compare it. By noon copies of the paper were being bought and sold for ten guineas.

At this hour thanksgiving hymns were being sung; and the name of Hardy was being made the text of a thousand sermons.

After the battle of Shorcham, he had been instinctively adopted by the race as its "darling;" the battle of the Channel made him definitely its hero; his letter made him its Leader.

He was at once elected a member of the Permanent Committee of National Safety.

Not that there was no searching of heart, no doubting, as to this extraordinary letter. To many people it seemed as wild as possible. All the proof which Hardy could adduce to shew that the Yellow Wave was near (if it was coming at all) was his contention that Yen How, having destroyed Europe by the European war, would not be silly enough to wait for Europe to recover herself before his invasion. The argument was sound, if the hypothesis was sound. But where were the signs of his coming? There was an "if."

On the whole, however, the nation had learnt to trust him; and trusting him, it stood aghast at his awful message.

At this time, the people of Britain, if they had never been so before, was genuinely a Nation, as distinct from a mob. They had suffered keenly together, resolved and acted nobly together: and they had been welded in the furnace-heat. By a Nation we mean a multifold Man. It was remarkable, about this period, how large an amount of attention was attracted by certain badly-spelt letters written to the papers. Each man felt himself verily part of the whole, and "the government was upon his shoulders."

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It was no longer a nation of shop-keepers—it was a nation of Councillors. "To be made perfect by suffering" is even more true of communities than of individuals. "Happy," it is said, "is the nation which has no history"—but "nation" in that phrase should be spelt "crowd." It is the Marathons and Trafalgars which knit and nationalise. At all events, Britain, now, with her largely decreased population, was certainly knit and nationalised. She could proceed from thought to action almost with the spontaneity of a single brain and arm. In her hand was the sword, but upon her brow sat Deliberation, and the grave air of the Statesman.

This was all the more, and not the less reason why Hardy's announcements should be followed by the wildest

Laden with booty.

dismay, the most unalloyed panic. For Britain, and every Briton, felt that it was England, in the end, who would have to dam the yellow wave, or sink beneath it; that it was she, and she alone, who must needs take up the cross of the world, and, like the Christ of the nations, with many an agony and bloody sweat, redeem mankind.

Whatever else was true or false in Hardy's letter, this, it was clear, was true: that, in the event of the yellow wave, Continental Europe was powerless.

When there would be no eye to pity, and no arm to save, it must, then, be the arm of Britain which should bring salvation. And *was it able . . .?*

There was the fleet of Japan, the fleet of China. And if even there were not the fleet of Japan, neither was there any longer a British fleet at all capable of opposing the landing, even in open boats, of an endless succession of innumerable armies on various parts of the coast.

These reflections at once occurred to everyone. And they had the same effect upon the mind, as if it had been scientifically announced that some fatal change was about to occur in the composition of the atmosphere of the earth.

It was felt, of course, that the yellow conquest could not be an ordinary conquest, if it happened at all. There was no question of conqueror and conquered living together afterwards and fraternizing, like Norman and Saxon. The yellow conquest meant, naturally, that wherever it passed, the very memory of the white races it encountered would disappear for ever.

At this dark thought, the heart quailed: and there was Panic.

And at five o'clock of the day of the *Times* two-columns, the *Pall Mall Gazette* came out with the following:

"*(From Our Own Correspondent.)*

"New York.—The *New York Evening Post* publishes to-day the report that a body of Thibetans (?) has seized the Russian railway between Kokand and Krasnovodsk, together with the partially-dismantled fortress at Samarkand, and have finally appeared at the east bank of the Caspian. Their number, probably amounting to ten or fifteen thousand, has not been definitely ascertained. The rumour originates, I understand, from an *Evening Post* correspondent at Astrakhan, and comes *vid* Odessa and Paris."

This item of news, meagre as it was, was enough for Britain. At once everyone jumped at the right conclusion. Here, it was agreed, were "the signs of his coming"—the first!

As when a sudden comet lowers near the earth, terrifying the heart of kings, prophesying Change to the nations, and shaking pestilence from her "horrid hair"—so, with its growing certainty, did the British nation cower at the dread future. Someone rediscovered the telegram about the 500 Chinese at Petersburg, and noised it abroad afresh. The bleak and dismal sky lowered darkly.

At twilight the Prime Minister was sitting by John Hardy's bed-side, which two physicians had just left.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Three Gospels.

About the time when the three important personages met at the inn, in the wood near Liège, Dr. Yen How was deep in study from morning to night. On the table before him, all round his feet, overflowing upon every article of furniture in the apartment, were maps, general maps, local maps, special maps, survey maps. He had a goodly wide brain, and every village in Europe, its position, its name, its population, and every stream, and fort, and railway, and town, was climbing into that brain, one after the other, with the intention of staying there. And when he was finished, he knew how Nature had made Europe, and how man had made it, and what was in it.

He knew also Asia.

While he was still pondering his maps, China was already far on its march. The seizure of the railway-line by "Thibetans" (?), reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had taken place four weeks before the news reached New York. The British army of India, afterwards annihilated in Russia, had passed that way, and left an easy task for the yellow pioneers.

Even before this, China had begun to flow westward. Yen How had found her a frozen stream; and like a frozen stream when the sun shines strongly, she had moved at last under his steady heat, slowly, in trickling rivulets, long before the crash of the dripping ice and the billowing broad rush of the torrent.

Having waked China by the methods we have described, how did he effect this irresistible Western tendency, so mighty in its impulse that an arm a million times stronger than Yen How's could not have checked it, had he willed?

He did it by preaching, with the inspiration of Confucius, only with a far greater success than Confucius, his three gospels of Greed, of Race, and of Cruelty.

And in doing so, he remembered the density of the skull which he had to inspire with ideas; he was not preaching even to Russian moujiks, but to men slower still of understanding. To plough a fact into their brains, he knew that he must plough hard. But he was quite equal to this. With his usual thoroughness he said: "A hundred ways: and of these *one* will not fail." At all events he had chosen

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the doctrines to teach which the Chinese were most apt to learn, and had, in fact, already been taught by nature. And herein lay his chief wisdom.

Just when the pressure of the new taxation crushed heaviest upon the penurious poor of China, he collected an army of 400,000, composed of men taken from each of the regiments into which all the land of the Mongols was now divided; and this force he hurled in two divisions across the Si-Kiang against Annam, the ancient antagonist of China, and Burma. The horrors perpetrated in these atrocious, and totally unexpected raids, could not be described; a great massacre resulted, and the army amassed hoards of spoil, gathered from many a Buddhist *vihára* and jewelled palace-gate. And immediately on its return, the individuals who composed it were redrafted, laden with booty, to their former districts, to spread through every village in China fairy-tales of gore and gold in foreign lands.

There was not, moreover, a drill-sergeant of the remotest squad of conscripts who did not become a missionary of Yen How, preaching for him the three glad tidings of Hades.

Many Chinese did not know that there was any other land than China, nor had, till the Massacre, seen a white man, nor known that there were such things as white men.

Now they heard and the astonished ear was charmed.

Could it be that beyond that land of pinched Scarcity which they knew, there was *Another*, in which feeble, pretty creatures, resembling real men, lived in rose-beds, and threw to one another balls of gold, and made love on couches of eider-down and ivory? And if not, what was this rumour, this tidings of good, coming strangely from afar, this new talk? And this new holiday of blood, and this new drilling, after four thousand years? And this new Movement, and this new stirring of sap in the old, dead tree-trunk after the long, long, changeless Winter? Surely the seasons return! and *by wondrous miracle* leaves are again on the branches, and all is new! There *is*, then, Spring and Joy in the world? and not utter, ugly Woe—four thousand years of age? Gold?—and frail, white limbs to be torn apart?—and the blood of luxurious kings to be quaffed by thirsty Chinamen in carved goblets of alabaster?—and cushions of embroidered silk hanging in plenty for all among the lazy, rotting melons on the far-off trees?

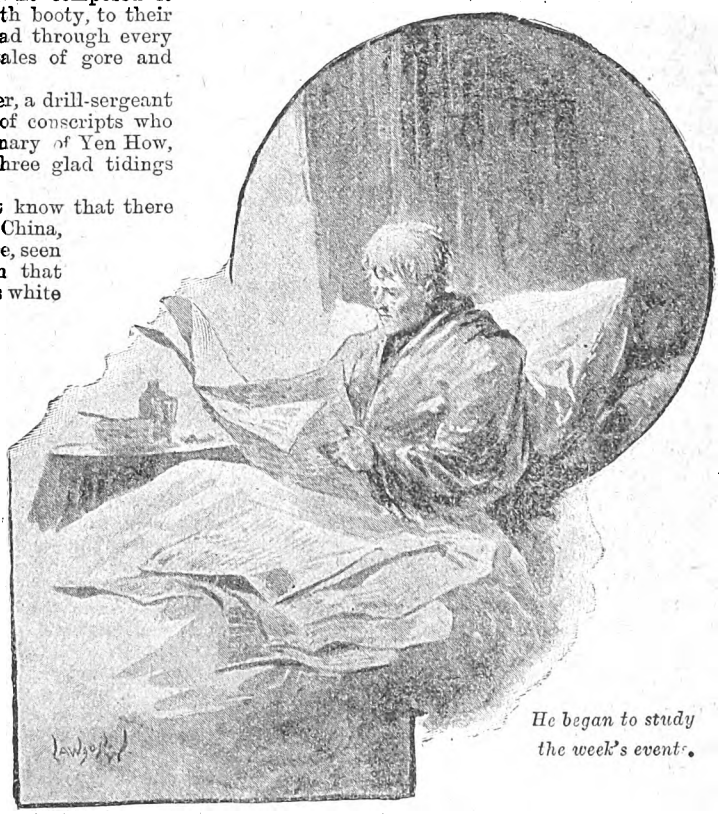
Far into the dreamiest wilds of savage China, Mongolia, Thibet, came this message of blessedness, this New Religion of lust. And every citizen became a convert, and every convert a zealot, and every zealot an apostle.

And the more intolerable Yen How made China for them with burden, and drill, and tax, the louder and deeper swelled their cry to be led forthwith into this promised land of plenty afar.

In the commentaries of Cæsar we read of whole communities packing, as it were, their trunks, leaving their own land, and migrating in a body to some new territory. It was this strange, wandering tendency which now possessed the Mongolian race; but instead of a tribe or community on the march, the stars were to look down and behold a nomad Empire.

This weird and, indeed, awful spectacle, Destiny had held concealed in her womb; for this, too, was to be one of the acts in the drama of Man; and in the fulness of time it was evolved, and seen.

But no one knew better than Dr. Yen How that the Mongolian race in its passage across the old world would meet with obstacle and pain—the weariness of the march, the day's hunger, the fight in the street, the rain of shot and shell at Metz, and Königsberg, and Paris, and Dover; as for the Japanese section of the race, they knew that Greed and Cruelty alone were incentives sufficient to provide a steady impulse to their native firmness and valour; but as for the Continental section of it, he decided to hurl them forward by an added impulse—the excitation of the instinct of Race.



He began to study the week's event.

In China this instinct took, always, a religious form. And hence Yen How had skilfully contrived to invest his Massacre with something of the solemnity of a Rite. In the cities round the coast, where the white man had long been known, and abominated, the massacre gave an impetus to racial animus, which perhaps was capable of no further fury; but, in addition, he planned for China on the whole a religious mania in connection with this very race instinct, which he counted upon to inspire it in the direction he willed with the frenzy of the Crusader.

The religion of China consisted in the worship of their dead; and this worship took the form also of the worship of the living, whenever the living happened to be a reincarnation of the dead. On this point Buddhism and Confucianism were at one: the belief in reincarnation.

The living were reincarnations of the dead when they were either proclaimed to be so by the priests, or when they were proclaimed to be so by the Emperor, or—when they could work miracles.

Now, Yen How could work the most astounding miracles; and he was proclaimed by the Emperor, and he was proclaimed all over China by the priests, to be the reincarnation of a dead man. And the dead man of whom he was proclaimed to be the reincarnation was—Confucius.

To begin with, he was made a Saint.

Then (at about the time when John Hardy joined the Englishmen at Kiao-chau) began a remarkable triumphant passage through China of this great man and his enormous Court of dignitaries, when, in a grand religious festival,

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lasting by Imperial Decree through a month, Yen How was presented and hailed in temple and at praying-mill, from Pekin to Lhassa, as the Heaven-descended Leader of the only Race, come back, according to old promise, to lead them to the conquest and fruition of the world. His progress was attended with more than imperial pomp; he was raised high on a throne of royal splendour, and exhibited to the muttering and kneeling people; the dazzled eye admitted him a god.

If in some mountain-dell of remotest China there had dwelt some benighted peasant who had never yet heard the name of Yen How, the ruler, the driller, the oppressor, there was certainly not one now who did not know of Yen How, the Reincarnate, the bringer of glad tidings, the Head of his People.

Confucius was China; and Yen How was Confucius. He stood for the Race.

Thus did he centre in his own Person the whole race-instinct and race-religion of the land. He associated the new creed of lust with the old of superstition; and of both he was the embodiment and Prophet.

He knew that principles must centre in a Person before they can lead nations by the nose, and fire them to heroism and martyrdom. No stirring Mahomedanism without Mahomet, and no strong Christianity without Christ. But in thus making himself the sole guide and motive-power, the one centre of adoration and trust, to the whole people, he went a step too far; he committed an error in tactics; he did not take into account every contingency.

For if the shepherd chance to perish, what will become of the sheep?

This was the very question which John Hardy, with his sure eye for the main fact among ten thousand, asked himself:

"If the shepherd chance to perish . . . ?"

At all events, it was the shepherd with which he, personally, had mainly to do. Between him and Yen How was the tug of war; and he knew it.

So, as he lay among his pillows, almost as white as they, a week after the battle in the channel, he called old Bobbie to him, and said:

"Bobbie, do you know anything about British regiments and the dress they wear?"

"Not much, I am afraid, Master John," answered Bobbie.

"Well, then, you will find out, please, and as soon as possible—to-day. I want to know what regiment it is whose privates wear——" and he frowned in an effort of recollection—"wear a scarlet uniform with white facings, and have somewhere about them a Prince of Wales' plume, and a Coronet. Yes, that is it. Please find out; and whether they are still in existence, and all about them."

The old servant bowed and went away. In his eyes now there was a perpetual look of wonder and reproach. The colour and taste of the world was changed to him; someone had meddled with his heart's delight; Hardy had come back, but the dazed old fellow could not find him.

Hardy was now recovering from an attack of asthma which had brought him near to death. When he opened his eyes to renewed care and thought, he had lost a week. The Chinese were now in Europe.

He put out his thin hand and languidly lifted a Times, and he saw the words: "The Yellow Terror," and his hand fell helplessly; and presently he lifted the paper again, and he glanced at another place, and saw the words: "It is *this scream of the Chinese* which seems to inspire their victims with some indefinable new species of terror, never before . . .;" and his hand fell again.

But already, by the next morning, he could sit up in bed to drink his cordial, and then he began to study the week's events. His vitality was in reality intense and tough, and the single thread by which he clung to life a strong one. He set to work to gather facts, and he could work stoutly.

While the pile of papers was still about him, old Bobbie hobbled into the chamber.

"This, I think, Master John, is the name of the regiment you want," said the old man, handing a slip of paper.

On the paper was written:

"The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment). Regimental Dist.: No. 57— Hounslow."

"Well, Bobbie, and what about them?" asked Hardy.

"The Depôt of the Regiment is Hounslow, Master John; and their late history is this: the first line battalion was in India at the beginning of the year, and the second line battalion was drafted from South Africa to join them a month after the commencement of the war. Both of these, as far as is known, have been destroyed in Russia. The 3rd and 4th (Militia) battalions have been fighting in North Germany, and seem to be no longer in existence, except for some few now in hospital at Chelsea, sir."

"And have you found out the names of those?"

"No, Master John."

"Then do so at once."

He went on reading. The actual details in the papers had about them a certain indefiniteness, and they were not voluminous; but he was quickly able to determine that the Chinese avalanche was pouring in four main streams.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF "BOOK" COMPETITION FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 23rd.

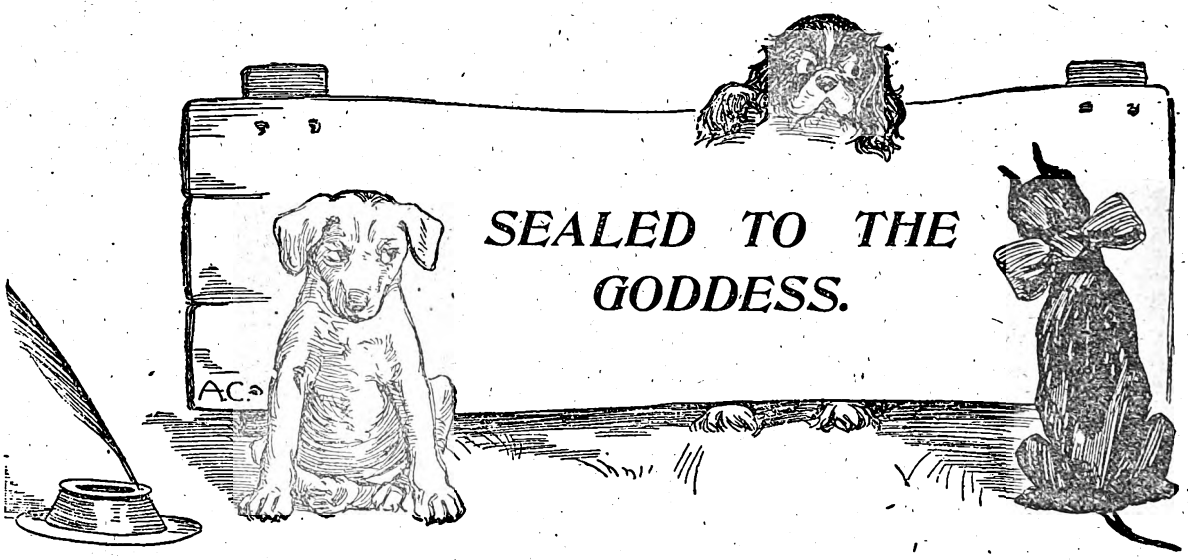
G. B. Hall, The Chantry, Ely. "Twenty-thousand Leagues Under the Sea." By Jules Verne.
H. C. Khyler, 95 Cedar Grove, Lodge Lane, Liverpool. "The Student's English Dictionary."
George Jenkins, Dafen House, Dafen, Llanelly, South Wales. "Cowham's School Method."
L. Albott, 10 Lindal Road, Crofton Park, Brockley, S.E. "Condemned as a Nihilist."
Miss Davison, 34 Lodge Road, The Avenue, Southampton. "Lord Oakburn's Daughters." By Mrs. Henry Wood.
E. Quayle, 33 Warner Street, Barnsbury, N. "Sign of the Cross." By Wilson Barrett.

RESULT OF "VERSELET" COMPETITION.

The winner of the £1 1s. in this competition is L. W. Judd, 2 Alfred Villas, Stanton Road, Barnes.

To the following twenty-five books have been forwarded:

J. E. Hehir, 149 Upper Lewis Road, Brighton.
W. T. M. Wallet, 1 Crescent, Minories, E.C., London.
W. E. Gould, 61 Gibralter Walk, Bethnal Green, E.
Miss E. Malone, Lissadele, Sligo, Ireland.
A. Lees, Central Board School, Normanton, Yorks.
J. T. Cricks, 121 Sebert Road, Forest Gate, E.
R. Lawson, 12 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh.
B. Croft, St. Margaret's Bury, Ware, Herts.
Miss Adams, 1 Camden Gardens, Shepherd's Bush.
W. G. H. Cable, 1 Gloucester Place, Greenwich, S.E.
F. Bradburn, 80 Brewery Road, Plumstead, S.E.
Miss B. Price, 266 Victoria Park Road, N.E.
H. Dolling, 57 Lower Clapton Road, Clapton, N.E.
D. O. Neill, 7 Stow Hill, Newport, Mon.
E. C. Thompson, 31 Pearcroft Road, Leytonstone, E.
W. Parker, 13 Cottage Row, St. James' Square, Hull.
A. W. Law, 261 Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction, S.W.
M. J. Borrows, 85 Regent's Road, Great Yarmouth.
Jessie Marriott-Hodgkins, 6 Leighton Mansions, Queen's Club Gardens, West Kensington.
H. C. Smith, 40 Vernon Street, Liverpool.
Mrs. Barrington, Kirk Langley, Derby.
Mary Oades, 26 Summers Town, Lower Tooting, S.W.
W. Shipway, 32 Howard Street, Reading.
E. Jenkins, 4 Hartington Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.
H. Howe, 3 Iverson Road, Brondesbury, N.W.



SEALED TO THE GODDESS.

It was Colonel Somers who told the story, prefacing it with the remark that he had no explanations to offer, therefore it would be useless to ask questions.

"At Burrampore," began the Colonel, "where I was stationed in 1860, I made the acquaintance of a smart young civilian of about five and thirty, who, under the old 'Compannee' had held a post of considerable trust in the Police Department. For his services during the Mutiny the Calcutta people had appointed him Deputy Commissioner.

"I will call him Baker; that was not his name, but Baker will do as well as another.

"On both sides of the Service, it was a matter of common report that Baker, disguised as a native, had been present at certain Hindoo ceremonies to which none but Brahmins are supposed ever to gain admittance.

"The man was perfectly fearless. There was nothing that Baker would not dare, to add another item to his continually growing stock of 'native' information.

"Some of the fellows, however, didn't conceal their opinion that some day Baker would go a bit too far. 'He'll get 'bogged,' they said, and the Service will lose a good man for a foolish fancy.' But nobody ever hinted that in his official capacity Baker had shewn himself other than a thoroughly practical Englishman, who had come into closer contact with the daily life of the people than the rest of us.

"I had been at Burrampore for the most part of two years. It was September; the great festival of the Doorga-pooja was being held. Going through the bazaar I stopped to listen to some ballad singers who were chanting the praises of Vishnoo and Krishna.

"At the close of their performance, a tall, muscular-looking Brahmin stepped into the circle. He was naked to the waist, round his loins he wore only a cloth, at his feet stood a basket, and in his right hand he held a small brass bowl. The trident traced in red upon his forehead proclaimed him a votary of Kali—the sanguinary goddess.

"Opening his lips, he invoked the blessing of Mother Durga.

"At the first notes of the invocation, two snakes crept out of the basket, and wound themselves about the bare brown legs. At the close, dipping his finger in the bowl, he pressed it against his forehead, leaving there a bright scarlet stain; and taking one of his pets in each sinewy hand, held them to the place, while the reptiles licked away the blood with a rapid movement of their tongues. Replacing the snakes in the basket, he drew himself proudly up, his eyes glowing with unholy fire; and, shouting '*Joy Kali!*' * proceeded to recite a passage from the Mahabharut.

"It was not till some minutes after I had left the crowd that I found I had an impression that Commissioner Baker was amongst the group of natives immediately facing the performer. I had not seen Baker. As a matter of fact I had *seen* no one—only the Brahmin, whose eyes flamed and flashed in a way that uncomfortably suggested the infernal.

"Why, then, should I have this feeling about Baker?

"The thing stuck in my mind, and I determined to ask Baker over our game of chess in the evening if he had heard the strange Brahmin reciting in the bazaar.

"It was nearly a month, however, before I had a chance of putting the question.

"The Commissioner had been called away suddenly to Ajmeer, and went off immediately after early breakfast. This 'thickened the gruel' certainly. I had no doubt whatever that Baker had been one of the audience in front of the Brahmin.

"The thing which puzzled me was that I should have the sense of his presence without the accompanying idea that I had seen him.

"However, it was not a thing to 'mag' about, and before the end of the month Baker was back.

"At our first meeting I was 'mum.' I wanted to see if Baker would give me a 'lead.' But he didn't—so, on the next occasion, we being alone, I remarked: 'By the way, Baker, there was a strange fellow reciting in the bazaar during the Doorga-pooja—a fellow with the most wonderful eyes and a voice like a flute. I wish you could have heard him.'

"He looked at me, I thought, in a peculiar sort of way, and observed quietly, 'Why do you say that, Somers? You know that I heard him.'

* Victory to Kali.

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"I tried to speak but could only stammer; the queer light in his eyes confused me. It was the first time I had noticed it there. He repeated the question with more insistence, keeping his eyes bent on me in that peculiar way in which I saw the glint I had seen in those of the Brahmin. The pupils seemed actually to become luminous and to glow with a fire that was not earthly. I remembered the queer tales which were told of Baker, and, at that moment believed them—every one.

"'You know that I was amongst the rabble in front of the man!' he insisted.

"'Well, I have that impression, certainly,' I answered. 'But where I got it I don't know. I'll swear that I never saw you.'

"He laughed, and the unnatural light in his eyes went slowly out.

"'If you had,' he said. 'I should have been food for the vultures before morning.'

"'And—how?' I queried.

"He took another cheroot, and lying back in his long lounging chair, smoked in silence for several minutes.

"'You'll think me a fool, I suppose, Somers,' said he speaking at last, 'and, I'm not so sure that you wouldn't do right to call me one. Of course, what I shall tell you, old man, is between ourselves.

"'With a view to utilising the knowledge in the interest of the Department, I have ventured to cross the boundary at several points.'

"'I thought that was no secret,' I remarked, as he came to a pause.

"He smiled.

"'Hitherto, my friend, the danger has always been personal; but a change in the circumstances may possibly bring about a change of contingencies. You don't catch my meaning, p'r'aps?'

"'No, I don't,' said I, not liking the turn the conversation was taking.

"'Well,' he returned, 'it'll be clear enough presently. For some little time now, I have been making a study of the darkest side of Hindoo mysticism and Oriental superstition. I've learnt many a trick from Mahomedan fakirs and Hindoo jogees—the one I practised upon you in the bazaar amongst others.'

"'That was a trick, was it?' I said, looking at my companion curiously.

"'Well, it was this way. From a clever scoundrel amongst the Baharupas, I learnt the art of projecting myself across another person's mental vision—by no means a difficult trick when you've learnt it. It does not require much more than a concentration of will. A man at Calcutta, who has acquired the power, can project to Bombay a mental image of himself or a distinct impression of his presence without the counterfeit presentment—provided his volition be sufficiently strong. It depends on the strength of the will current.'

"I suppose I must have looked incredulous, for he added quickly: 'Old Nynee Lal, my dear fellow, who taught me, could do a thing that would make this business shrink to very small dimensions. And that bazaar Brahmin—he belongs to a caste which claims to control the will and determine the actions, even to the doing of deeds which men shall tremble to hear.'

"'But, surely,' I began, 'you don't——'

"'——Say, yea, or nay,' he struck in. 'But the mental impression which I was able to fix upon you under the simplest conditions was a bit of mere apprentice work compared with what I have witnessed. Trickery, illusion, deception, of course. Well, I can't prove it, and that's what irks me.'

"'You must have had some object, I suppose,' said I, 'in desiring to impress me with the fact of your presence in the crowd?'

"'I had,' was the answer, 'and a very practical one, too. Lal Singh, the Brahmin, is a priest of Kali, serving the chief temple of that amiable goddess at Benares. I heard that he would be at the Doorga-pooja, and determined to seize the opportunity to learn, if possible, a few of the secrets of esoteric Sivaism. The worship of Mother Durga demands many a victim, and I've good warrant for saying that the blood which flows is not always that of "bulls and goats." I can pass anywhere as a native, and had arranged through Nynee for initiation; but Lal Singh has eyes like needle-points—they go through one, and as I looked at the man who was to perform the ceremony, a curious, uneasy sort of feeling crept over me. Vowed to Kali, he would think no more of plunging his knife into me on occasion, than I of shooting a bustard.

"'Seeing you in the crowd, it occured to me that in case of "accident" it might be as well for you to carry away the impression that I had been in the bazaar.

"'The business, however, passed off without "accident." I won't describe the ritual; I thought I was pretty well hardened; but it made the flesh creep on my bones. I wouldn't go through it again to learn the dearest secret in Mother Nature's bosom. There was no human sacrifice. The horrible Shaktee ceremonies are never performed upon initiation. But the place looked like a slaughter-house and smelt like a shambles. A bowl of warm blood stood on the altar and the image itself was splashed with it from head to foot.

"'The old rascal sealed me on the forehead with the seal of the goddess, while the sacred snake licked off with its tongue — though, sometimes, I fancy it's there

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still under the skin. This pretty thing,—' opening his shirt-front, he displayed a queer-shaped, black-looking stone. It had five faces and on each face was carved the device of Kali. It was attached to a Brahminical thread which he wore round his neck.

"'This pretty thing, inscribed with Kali's seal in her favourite vermilion, I got in exchange for three rupees. Strange, isn't it, that priests everywhe e always have these little perquisites attached to their office. When the Mother requires the services of her new recruit she will communicate with him in some mysterious manner through the stone.'

"He laughed, but the laugh made me shudder. 'Pitch it into the river,' I said, 'and, for goodness' sake, Baker, keep clear of this business. India isn't the country in which to play jokes with the horrible.'

"'Hello!' he exclaimed. 'Are you hit? You, my boy? Why, Somers, I thought pig-sticking and tiger-shooting had driven all that dreamy stuff clean out of your brain.'

"'I think these matters are best left alone,' said I, a bit nettled. 'Well, that,' said Baker, 'is a question we won't discuss. My object in sealing myself to the god less—don't shiver, my dear fellow—is twofold. To gain knowledge which may be useful to the Department—the priests of the Death-Mother, you will remember, were notable agents in stirring up the mutiny—and also to test for private satisfaction the nature and strength of powers which, here, are believed in implicitly, however much we may despise them at home.

"'Now, having said so much, I'll be frank, Somers, and say more. I'm really sorry I ever touched the thing. I feel more uncomfortable about it than I like. But I won't go back on it through funk—query, if I could?

"'Four months, I reckon, will suffi e to knock the bottom out of the business, or—wipe Tony Baker out of the Service.

"'It stands this way. Without admitting probability of danger, I wish to provide against possible contingencies.'

"'Great heavens!' I exclaimed, beginning now to catch a hint of his meaning. 'Have you gone mad?'

"'Not yet,' he answered, smiling, 'but, seriously, Somers, put me under surveillance, my dear fellow; begin to-day. If you should notice anything about me that strikes you as—suggestive; anything that looks—h'm—like going smash, speak to the doc—likely I'll drop Reid a us ful hint myself on the Q. T.—and have me put under restraint. Then send off to Ajmeer for Nynee Lal the *poojari*; give him the ring which I wear on the little finger, and tell him that the grey wolf hath need of him. He'll know what to do. Kali the Insatiable demands within three months of initiation a human victim. Her novice must prove himself, or—— Well, we don't believe the nonsense, of course. All the same though, old man, I've had some queer experiences in India.

"'Soon after coming out, an o d fellow came one day to my tent, and, after sitting silent awhile, begged permission to draw my horoscope. I gave him some particulars he asked for and dismissed him. Two weeks later, he came again, bringing a nativity card—it's in my possession now, you can s e it at any time. Of course he wanted *backsheesh*, but the point which concerns me is that everything set down in the table of periods has happened as predicted.

"'Don't misunderstand me. The nativity card isn't a monthly calendar. The old man divided my life into peric ds—indicat ng the critical years and forecasting the important passages. He's been right all the way.

"'Now listen, and remember, please, that it was not till after my return from Ka i's shrine that I thought of consulting the old nativity card, which I had not looked at since before coming to Burrampore. "It is now," says the card, "in this period—" that is the period I am now passing through, "that the great crisis in your life will occur. At this time you will pass under a dark shadow of fearful shape. You will leave this country and go over the black water, but the shadow will stay with you; and before the end of the period is reached"—it corresponds to December '63 by our reckoning, "the tale of thy years will be told."

"'Not a jot or a tittle of that will fail, Somers. It has the witness of fifteen years behind it.

"'But I see, Somers,' he went on, changing his tone on the instant, 'you can't take these little things so philosophically as I do; which shows you're a healthy English animal. Open the piano, my dear fellow, and let's play over a few airs from the operas.'

* * * * *

"It was just thirteen weeks after the conversation with Baker, that I found myself one of a small dinner-party given by the Collector to a few of the 'John Company' men. When the ladies withdrew, Baker sat opposite me.

"After the first month the disagreeable impression his story had left began to fade. By the end of the second month I could have believed it to be only the faint remembrance of some hideous dream.

"Everything was going the regular round. The gossip was not more ill-natured or personal than usual, nor did Baker's name come into it oftener than before. Sometimes I had a notion that Reid, the regimental doctor, would shoot a keen glance at the Commissioner; but not another word had been said to me on the subject; and gradually I had ceased to 'keep a watch.'

"Two days, however, before the dinner, Baker himself startled me by saying:

"'You haven't forgotten, I hope, what I asked of you, Somers?'—therefore, when he deliberately took the seat immediately facing me, I had an uncomfortable sensation that something was going to happen.

"The decanters had been twice round, when I noticed that odd, luminous glitter in Baker's eyes which on a previous occasion had given them such a strange, unearthly glow.

"At the same time it occured to me that the man had been fumbling in his bosom for several minutes—feeling for that wretched bit of stone he kept there, the seal of Kali, wife of Siva the Destroyer. His voice, however, was still the voice of Baker—soft, persuasive, bland. Yet I observed that his eyes grew ever larger and brighter; while his body began to quiver as if under some uncontrollable emotion.

"I sat star ng at him, unable to do anything, save watch the glittering eyes, which presently assumed an expression that was perfectly fiendish in its frightful malignity. Suddenly I heard Reid's voice—he had gone out of the room for a few moments—and at the same instant Baker, rising in his seat, shouted in a tone of fierce exultancy: '*Jey Kali! Kali mata ke jey!* I am thine, Mother. *O maha Kali!*'

"By this time the doctor had got round the table; and I, having recovered from the spell which had paralysed me, was also now at Baker's side. In his eyes, which flamed with lurid light, there lurked possibilities of most fearful danger.

"The man's entire nature had undergone a change.

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The cool, clear-headed Englishman had become the insane votary of the sanguinary Goddess on whose name he was calling by all the accursed phrases in the Gurúra Purána. Before we could stop him he had flung himself on the Judge. A naked weapon gleamed for a moment, but the doctor and I stuck to him, and Judge Matheson escaped with a nasty cut on the left cheek.

"The sight of the blood seemed to send Baker into a sort of frenzy. He laughed till we could have strangled him.

"'The man's blood-mad.' I heard the words without knowing who spoke them. But the doctor and I had exchanged a few whispers, and a messenger had already gone for Nynee Lal. Meanwhile, Indian hemp was handy, and ere long the patient lay unconscious on the floor.

"'What the mischief—?' began the doctor, and stopped. It was the seal of the Goddess, which, catching his eye, had provoked the exclamation. He looked at me. I made to tear it off, but he prevented me. 'Leave it,' he said almost fiercely. 'What business has he in this galley? The thing's *anathema*. Leave it for Nynee Lal. They're the devil's own, every one of these arch-priests of Kali.'

"It seemed a weary time before Nynee arrived. He appeared to know exactly what was required of him.

"Baker had recovered somewhat from the narcotic effects of the drug, and was gazing in rapt ecstasy upon some vision of the mind—'the blood-splashed image of Mother Durgá,' said the doctor.

"The old *poojari* began by sprinkling some incense over the bottom of a shallow brass plate, some red powder was poured into another, and some ashes of sandalwood into a third. While the perfume of the incense was filling the room, Nynee sat on his heels watching the blue smoke as it ascended upwards, and muttering scraps from the Gurúra Purána,—'the Devil's Litany,' the doctor called it.

"Of us, the *poojari* seemed quite as unconscious as was Baker.

"The incantations presently ceased, and the old man solemnly rising, drew round the patient a magic circle. Then divesting himself of his upper garments, he took some of the red powder, threw a few grains on the incense, which immediately flamed up, and, smearing the rest on his forehead, entered the circle, repeating the words: 'I greet thee, O Brother, in the name of the Mother.'

"Taking his place immediately behind Baker he crossed his hands over the Commissioner's head, muttering a few words in Sanscrit as he did so.

"The man stiffened, every muscle in his body becoming rigid, every feature fixed. Nynee continued to weave spells with his hands for the space of a minute; then, taking some ashes of sandalwood on which incense had been sprinkled, he rubbed the forehead of the patient with the mixture.

"In a few minutes Baker's eyes, which had been staring wide, closed. The *poojara* removed from his neck the mystic thread, placed the stone in a fold of his own girdle, and wetted the Commissioner's lips with some stuff from a diminutive-looking brass vessel, produced from the same receptacle.

"'The *sahib* will sleep long while,' he said, addressing us for the first time. 'When he wakes, his strength will be as water. Of Kali, the Black One, he will have no recollection. Our gods are not his gods, and he must go to his own.'

"Then Nynee Lal gathered up his property and departed.

* * * * *

"A month later Baker went home on sick leave. All the vitality seemed to have been drained out of the man. He could never make out what had happened to him; but never by any chance referred to the incidents which connected him with the terrible scene in the Collector's dining-room.

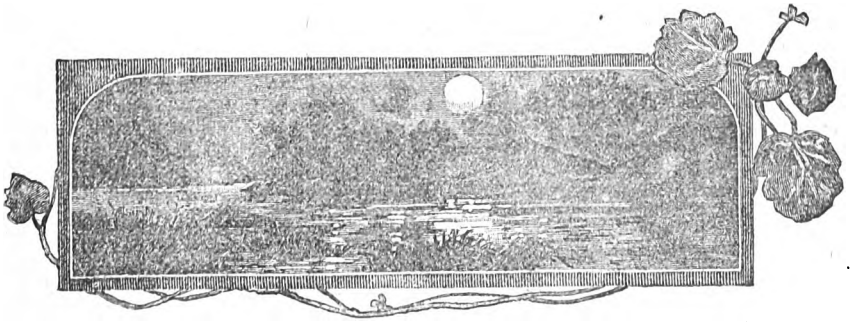
"At the end of the season I went to the Punjab; and for three years heard no more of Commissioner Baker. At the beginning of '67, however, I was in Calcutta and happened to meet Reid.

"'Baker?' said he, in reply to a query of mine. 'The man's dead—only lived about six months after reaching home.

"'Died in the following November. I had it from the doctor at Clayborough. He wrote me several times about the case. Couldn't understand it a bit. No disease, no wasting. Just a slow ebbing away of the vital power—end, total collapse. You didn't expect anything else, did you, after that devil's business at Burrampore?'

"And so," concluded the Colonel, "was fulfilled the prediction on the old jogee's nativity card."

H. Hunter.



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CHAPTER XIX.

"Poor Louise."

"*Mars adamat Venerem!*" said Tristan, who had quite recovered his spirits and was spouting Latin with the volubility of a cheap-jack recommending his wares.

"With the help of Bacchus and his nymphs, we shall soon be masters of the gates, and then we can say '*Pandantur portae!*'"

"That's it," chimed in Trefouilloux confidently, "we'll hang every soldier to the gates who dares to refuse us!"

This remarkably free translation made Tristan laugh till his sides ached, and the good citizens said as they watched him:

"He's not too learned to enjoy a good joke like one of ourselves."

The guards at the Porte aux Peintres had been on the alert for some time as they heard the increasing tumult in the city, and their captain had ordered the gates to be closed and the portcullis to be lowered.

"What on earth is all this row?" he asked. "Has the whole city gone mad?"

Perhaps some of his soldiers had already been won over to the cause, for they answered calmly.

"Oh, it's nothing!" and at first it appeared as if they said true, for the crowd kept back, shrouded in the darkness, Samson having ordered all the torches to be extinguished; and only a gay, laughing band of girls advanced towards the archers, offering them wine and challenging them to join the dance. Nothing loth to enjoy themselves, the gallant sons of Mars responded cordially to the invitations of Venus, and as the cups were passed to and fro suspicions were lulled, and before many minutes had elapsed, the hand of a susceptible young archer had drawn the bolts back and the game was won.

The women sprang forward, and a cry of triumph rose from the hitherto silent crowd in the background. The half-drunken guard was speedily overpowered, despite the heroic efforts of the captain to resist the mob.

As the gates were flung open, La Fontanelle, who had followed the train at some distance, caught hold of a young girl she had brought with her, and said hurriedly:

"Martha, do you remember your sister Agnes, whom they called 'the Fair'?"

The girl had been laughing madly with the rest, but at these words her face clouded and hot tears started to her eyes.

"All right. I see that you've not forgotten her. You can cry over your murdered sister,—would you like to avenge her death?"

Martha seized both the woman's hands and her dark eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Well then, listen to me. The man who killed your sister is in this crowd, hidden under a disguise as he thinks, the coward that he is! You run as fast as you can to the Louvre, ask to see the King's page Albret, and tell him what you have seen."

"And will he come and kill my sister's murderer?" asked the girl in a tearful voice.

"Yes, he will come and kill him, if you don't forget to say that those who have forced the gate are on their way to take by storm the Abbey St. Martin, where Queen Ingeburge and her attendant, the Danish girl Eve, are in danger."

Martha needed no second bidding, but started off, fleet as a hare, and sure-footed as a mountain goat.

The drunken rabble surged through the gates, smashing the heads of the luckless victims of their hospitality as they went, and bearing triumphantly before them the wounded form of the captain of the guard in a roughly improvised litter.

In the open ground outside the walls the mob spread itself over the gardens and cultivated fields, leaving ruin and desolation wherever they trod. The torches were re-kindled, voices were raised louder than ever, and the destroying host pursued its mad march unchecked and triumphant. Not a flower, not a leaf, not a blade of grass was left where this swarm of human locusts had passed.

The three tallest and most powerful knaves carried a huge oaken beam immediately behind the banner, and this was to serve as a battering-ram, while they were followed by about fifty desperadoes armed with hatchets and mallets. In the centre of the force came a handful of Free-lances that they had managed to hire, and they were regarded as the mainstay of the attacking party, for men trained under Cadocu were better fighters than even the King's regulars.

These fellows knew that they would meet with a warm reception from their former chief when he knew that they had been concerned in this night's work, so they were very eager to provide for their future out of the abundant plunder that a rich abbey would afford.

The rest were flourishing branches which they had torn off the trees as they passed, old rusty swords, broken halberds, and even cooking spoons!

In the wake of this noisy horde walked a man and a woman, who, though evidently on the same errand, yet managed to keep apart from the main body. The man was dressed as a tramp, and his rags were of the filthiest description. The woman wore an exaggerated costume of the kind affected by the dancing girls of the city, and yet, when these two had met, evidently by appointment, in the Rue

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aux Ours, the beggar had greeted her with a bow that would have done credit to the grandest courtier, and he might be heard from time to time addressing her with supplicating deference as "My Queen."

His fulsome adulation couched in poetic language savoured strongly of the chivalrous Courts of Love, with its romantic ballads and pretty courtesies.

She was sullen and unresponsive to his advances. Every attempt to propitiate her failed, for she had neither time nor thought to waste on such folly. Her mind was set on murder! Amaury Montruel, for it was he, as you will have guessed, had drawn his soft felt hat well down over his face to avoid detection, and Madame Agnes had so arranged the fantastic trimming of her headgear that only her dark, penetrating eyes were visible.

At last she broke the silence which she had imposed upon him, with:

"A whole week gone without a single thing to show for it! I think I was a fool to put my trust in you, Sir Amaury!"

"Ah! my Queen! If you knew half of what I suffered in that eternity that you call a week—"

She interrupted him, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously:

"What about that foreign knave you counted upon so surely?"

"Mahmoud-el-Reis has been in the Abbey St. Martin for some hours by this time."

"Then why all this masquerade? Are you afraid your infidel will not strike the blow home?"

"Up to this morning I had no fear, but then I made a discovery that both surprised and alarmed me."

Agnes turned upon him suspiciously:

"What discovery?" she demanded imperiously, seeing that he hesitated.

"Mahmoud-el-Reis has carved a statue," replied Montruel slowly, as if choosing his words carefully, "and this statue, which seems to him as an object of devotion, is the portrait of Madame Ingeburge!"

"*Holà*, comrades!" shouted a stifled voice from the rear of the crowd, "don't go so fast, it's all up hill, and we've plenty of time!"

"*Celsa sedet Eolus arce!*" replied Tristan, who was still well to the fore. "The wine of the monks is at the brow of the hill! A little more courage, boys, if you want to arrive before supper!"

"And supposing Mahmoud betrays you?" said Agnes bitterly.

"If Mahmoud betrays me," answered Montruel, lowering his voice, "I have found another man to do his work."

They had drawn a little nearer to the rabble, and he pointed out cautiously, a wretched creature some paces in front of them, who, as he turned round, showed a face, the villainy of whose expression made it remarkable, even in that mass of human depravity.

Madame Agnes looked at him carefully in the lurid light of the waving torches, and said, with a shudder of disgust:

"I have seen that man before somewhere."

"Yes, you've seen him outside Nôtre-Dame, my Queen, it was he who asked for the ruby pendant from your necklace. Don't you recognise 'Poor Louise'?"

She turned upon Montruel with an angry gesture, for she was in no mood for joking. But he was quite serious. This man, known to the greater part of Paris as "Poor Louise," was the successful rival of Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux, and offered for the consideration of the public his phenomenal physical construction consisting of four arms, one of which terminated in a goat's foot.

In return for a comparatively small sum Poor Louise had undertaken to supply the place of Mahmoud-el-Reis, in the event of his not having executed Montruel's orders, and to dispatch Madame Ingeburge with all speed, so soon as he should gain admittance to her presence.

He possessed great advantages over the Moslem, for he was neither influenced by false delicacy nor inspired by any

"Martha, do you remember your sister Agnes?"

poetic dreams of love and chivalry. Nothing appealed to his brutal nature but money.

Madame Agnes studied this new partizan with more calmness when she knew his value, and then broke off:

"The King is beginning to give way! This first day of the council has had a great effect on him, I can see, and I tell you it is more than ever important to get rid of this woman. Her life is my death!"

The three bearers of the battering-ram had by this time reached the gates, and a halt was made for the others to come up; then a furious onslaught was made on the iron-clamped door, and in a few seconds it gave way before the force of the attack.

The good monks, as we have seen, were wholly unprepared for this incursion, and were either retiring to rest or performing such duties as their offices required of them, secure in the peaceful and sacred character of their house.

In right of the Lord Abbot's temporal power, the monastery was garrisoned by a small, but well-disciplined force of archers, but, unfortunately, the scare about the assassin had taken these men from their posts just before the attack was made; had it been otherwise, the mob would soon have been beaten back, for the Abbey was so constructed that it could be held by a very small garrison.

As it was, the rabble met with no opposition when they got inside the vestibule, and a rush was made for the great staircase, which led to the main portion of the building.

In less time than it takes to write it, the usually calm, peaceful scene was converted into Pandemonium itself, the off-scourings of the city polluted the incense-laden air with their foul jests and ribald oaths, the long silent corridors were turned into channels for this turbid living torrent, the cells were invaded, the larder ransacked, the refectory, and even the chapel itself, thronged by these abandoned men

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Perched herself on the broad sill.

and women, who revelled and fought under the shadow of the carved saints, and in sight of the Crucifix that bore silent witness in every room.

Tristan, who had been well supplied with wine on the way by the nymphs of Bacchus, was now quite incoherent, and his Latin would have paired admirably with that of Ezekiel or Tréfouilloux.

"Let's sack the place and burn the old shavelings out!" cried one and another.

"Bring us Ingeburge the alien!" shouted men and women alike.

The clash of arms and cries of the wounded were heard wherever the Free-lances and archers fought their way. Blood flowed freely, plunder and rapine raged in the abode of prayer and peace, and instead of midnight orisons there rose the yells of fiends in human shape in their quest for loot and liquor.

Some clamoured for the destruction of the Abbey by fire, others for the extinction of the monks. Tréfouilloux was in favour of the former, "*De fundum in comblum*," as he stated with dignity; but Ezekiel, who had an exact mind, corrected him thus: "*De fondo in comblos.*"

In spite of all this seeming confusion the real object of the raid was never lost sight of, for Maitre Samson had kept his head clear, and when he saw signs of demoralization, he whispered in the ear of one he could rely on, and immediately the cry was raised:

"Ingeburge the alien! Bring her out!"

While the main body had pressed into the Abbey, three figures, two men and a woman, had remained near the great door. The men were Montruel and "Poor Louise" and the woman was Madame Agnes.

"When you leave the vestibule," Montruel was saying to "Poor Louise" in a low tone, "turn to the right and go up the big staircase till you come to the statue of St. Martin: then turn to the right again and you will get to the second floor where the hospital is. You will very likely find a monk in charge, but if you show him your knife and say you will cut his throat if he does not tell you in which cell Jean Cador is, you'll be all right. Do you understand?"

"Yes, is that all?"

"Jean Cador will be able to tell you where Madame Ingeburge is to be found."

"And when I've found her——" began "Poor Louise" with a hideous grin. "I'll——" and he made an eloquent thrust with his knife.

Montruel turned to the listening woman, who had withdrawn into the darkest nook she could find, to ask if she were satisfied, and "Poor Louise" started upon his dark errand.

"Stop!" cried the woman. "Poor Louise" obeyed with a bad grace, and Montruel thought, for a moment, that some gleam of pity had at last penetrated Madame Agnes' hard heart, but she soon undeceived him by saying, in low, cold tones:

"Suppose Jean Cador is a traitor, or is lying insensible, helpless, from the effects of this morning's dose, what then?"

Montruel sighed, he was sick of bloodshed.

"If Jean Cador gives you any trouble, you must kill him, and anyone else who stands in your way. The monks will soon tell you if you prick them with your knife! Only begone, and do it quickly!"

"If you succeed," added Agnes, "I will give you a solid gold chain, worth thirty gold crowns, in addition to what you have been already promised."

"Poor Louise" gave a yell of joy, and vanished brandishing his knife. He might beg for years and not get half such a sum, this was a chance he would never have again, he must make the most of it!

As soon as he had gone, Montruel and Madame Agnes stepped back into the garden and disappeared in the copse adjoining the Abbey.

CHAPTER XX.

The Sacking of the Abbey St. Martin.

A venerable old man with white hair, and a grave, kindly face, appeared at the door of the large hall opening out of the refectory, and he was instantly greeted with frantic cries of "Ingeburge the alien! Bring out Madame Ingeburge!" as the excited revellers pressed upon him. They thought he was someone of importance and they were right, for it was Prior Anslem himself. He looked sadly at the sea of faces before him, some of which were flushed and triumphant, others bestial and besotted, all marred by indulgence in the lowest passions of humanity; and there was in his voice a calm dignity as he put the simple question:

"Who are you who thus defile the house of God?"

"If it please you, Sir Prior," began Tristan with a desperate effort to speak plainly, "we are the pious sons of the University. We come here on a pious errand—*Pieiatis Causae.* It distresses us sorely to be deprived of the Sacraments of our holy Mother, the Church, so we wish to break down the barrier between us and our eternal welfare."

"Well said! That's it!" shouted his followers.

In order to emphasise this solemn announcement still further, Tréfouilloux brought forth, with unction, the treasures of his learning:

"*Magnificat! Benedictus! Cicero! Cara Michel Larigus.*"

A slight flush spread over the old Prior's face, as he answered gravely:

"You mock at holy things, my poor children! May God grant you time and place for repentance!"

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These simple, earnest words, spoken, as they were, out of the fulness of the good man's heart, did not fail to touch those of his hearers. Many heads were bent in shame, many eyes were wet with tears, many hearts were struck with fear, and for a moment an ominous silence fell upon all.

"*Quousque Tandem*——" began Tristan at last, but Samson, interrupting him, took the word with due gravity.

"Reverend Father, raillery is far from our thoughts! We are only striving to do here what the most illustrious council is working to effect in the city. We desire to put an end to the lamentable state of things under which our beloved kingdom is suffering. We serve Church and King. If you will deliver Madame Ingeburge into our hands, we will conduct her out of France, which she never ought to have entered, and, if needs be, see her safely to her native land."

Samson was a clever rogue. By these well-chosen words he repudiated all idea of blasphemy or violence, and the awakened consciences of the mob were speedily lulled to rest again. What better motive could they have than to remove the cause of discord from the land, and enable both King and people to make their peace with the Church? With the facile conscience of an excited multitude, they quickly persuaded themselves that they were there on a holy mission, so that when the Prior attempted to reply to Samson's sophistry, his voice was drowned in an angry murmur.

"Reverend Father, you are wrong!" bawled Tréfouilloux insolently. "The noble scholar Tristan, King of the Basoche, told you his mind when he called you *Quousque Tandem!*"

"But," vainly interposed Tristan.

"*Quousque Tandem! Quousque Tandem!*" resounded on all sides.

While Prior Anselm was endeavouring to get a hearing in this wild babel of derisive tongues. "Poor Louise" was stealthily pursuing his way along the path mapped out by Amaury Montruel, thinking of the promised reward of thirty gold crowns. Had he recognized Madame Agnes in the veiled woman, the remembrance of her former benefactions would have checked his hopes and made him feel disposed to try the point of his knife in her avaricious breast.

He found his way quite easily to the second floor where the hospital cells were situated, and met neither monk nor lay-brother to bar his passage or prove his prowess, for that part of the building had been, as we have seen, quite deserted by all those who could either fight or flee.

Meanwhile the little party in Jean Cador's cell had remained in a state of agonised suspense. Eric tried again and again to read the inscrutable face of the Moslem in the dim light, but it was impossible. More than once he thought he heard a curious noise as of snapping cords, but he bent down and carefully examined the Syrian's bonds and found them intact, so far as he could see, and he felt not a little humiliated as he noticed the grave smile with which his precautions were received.

Every moment increased their danger. They could hear the rush of feet below them, and more than once the cry of "Fire" had risen above the general tumult. As the panic was reaching its height, Mahmoud-el-Reis spoke to Eric for the first time.

"If you will cut these bonds, I can save the Queen."

"Have these people come to kill the Queen, then?"

"They will set me free, if you don't. But it will then be too late to save the Queen!"

"Then you're in league with them! You know their errand!" cried Eric, seizing his dagger. "You confess that the Queen's life is in danger! But I swear that neither they nor I will deliver you, for at the first step in this cell, you will be a dead man!"

Mahmoud vouchsafed no other answer to this outburst than to say:

"There is but one God who is God, and Mohammed is His Prophet! The destiny of man is written in the book of Allah. It is not the will of Allah that the Queen should escape."

Suddenly a ruddy glow illuminated the cell. It came from the court-yard beneath one of the windows, where the more light-hearted of the rioters were dancing to the music of ribald songs.

Buried his dagger in the ruffian's breast.

At the close of each round a chorus of voices raised the catch-word: "Ingeburge the alien! Ingeburge, the bane of France and her King!"

The poor Queen covered her face with her hands as she listened, and murmured:

"That is my death sentence! I pray you, my fathers, prepare my soul to appear before God!"

The monks, at first, neither heard nor understood, but she continued her supplications till the younger one came and knelt at her side and began to mutter incoherently the commendatory prayer.

Eve was kneeling on the ground at the other end of the cell, and over her head was a high, deeply-set window looking towards the old Roman road which led from the Porte-aux-Peintres.

On this side of the Abbey all was quiet, and the pure white light of the moon formed a fitting contrast to the lurid glare of the torches which came from the interior of the building, while the soft sighing of the night-wind fell soothingly upon the ear in the short intervals of peace that the watchers were permitted. The contrast between Nature in repose and Humanity in revolt was painfully marked; but none of them had time to notice this, save perhaps the Syrian.

A new sound caught Eve's ear, and she started up instantly, for it came from the direction of the city.

In a moment she had swung herself up by the bar which

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For a moment he was seen in the glare of the flames, the dark Moslem and the white Queen.

ran across the window and perched herself on the broad sill. At first she could see nothing, but by insinuating her head out of the opening she could distinguish the clatter of horses' hoofs and the clang of armour, then, as it came nearer, she caught sight of bright, moving specks, glancing in the moonlight, through the mutilated trees. She was quick to recognise them as the glittering breast-plates and sparkling helmets of the King's soldiers.

"The soldiers! The King's soldiers!" she cried raptuously.

Mahmoud looked up at once, and Eric was surprised to see pleasure rather than chagrin depicted on his face. It was impossible to understand this man;

The Queen had risen at her husband's name and was looking anxiously at the young girl.

"Is it a large troop of men?" asked the Moslem.

"They cover the road! said Eve quickly, and her heart was beating fast with joy as she added in a lower tone, "and I know who leads them! I know him! I know him!"

Mahmoud was still listening intently to every sound that came to them from the interior of the Abbey, and now he turned to Eve, saying:

"If they are near enough, maiden, call to them that they come quickly, or it will be too late!"

"Albret!" called Eve with all her might. "Albret, my lord! my friend come to the rescue!"

But the night-wind carried her clear young voice in the other direction, and the next time she tried to shout, her voice could not even be heard by those in the cell, so fierce was the tumult below.

After the temporary lull caused by the parley with Prior Anselm, the rioters had broken loose again with renewed vigour. The first floor had already been pillaged, an outlying part of the building had been set on fire and the flames were casting their light on the revolting scene. Death and destruction seemed to be engulfing all, even those who had come to destroy.

Eve dropped from the window and resumed her place at the Queen's side, while Eric laid hold of his dagger, prepared to fulfil his threat, and the two monks fled from the cell, perhaps to meet a worse fate.

The trained ear of Mahmoud-el-Re's could distinguish between the rush of the rabble and the steady tramp of the soldiers. But who would reach them first? The assassins or the rescuers?

Just as the monks reached the end of the corridor they met "Poor Louise," who promptly took the first man by the throat and demanded:

"Where is Jean Cador's cell?"

The terrified monk fell senseless at his feet, and his companion could only make frantic gestures to the door they had just left.

Tristan and his band were pressing up behind. Some of them heard an increased clash of arms below, but none paused to account for it, so "Poor Louise" felt he had no time to lose. Dealing a blow with his fist at the second monk, he made for the door indicated, and the first thing his eyes met was Eve clinging to her mistress.

At the sight of his repulsive face and tremendously bulky form, his fat red hand waving the long butcher's knife, both the women shrank back involuntarily in terror and disgust.

"Ha, ha!" thought the brute, "I'm on the right track now."

Turning to the two men he said:

"Which of you is Jean Cador, carver of images?"

"I am," replied Eric promptly, and bending down he whispered to Mahmoud:

"If you deny it, you're a dead man!"

The Syrian made no answer, but as Eric's attention was necessarily diverted from him, there might have been heard a renewal of that strange cracking sound, and when it ceased, the captive gave a deep sigh of relief.

(To be continued.)

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"Ah, ah, so you're Jean Cador? Are you? Then you can tell me which of these two is Queen Ingeburge!"

"I am the Queen!" said Eve, stepping forward bravely.

"Poor Louise" made a dash at the girl, and had already raised his long knife when he felt himself dragged backwards by the hair, and with a quick plunge, Eric had buried his dagger in the ruffian's breast. Like a huge inert mass, the wretch lay at his feet. Without a twitch or a change of colour, he fell in a heap, just as the others swarmed up to the door.

Tristan had not forgotten the face of the prettiest girl in Paris, through all his mad carouse, and most of his fluent Latin phrases had been in praise of the divinity, whom in his eyes, she excelled in charm.

The moment he caught sight of her he waved his cap and cried: "At last! *En Ecce!* Behold her!" and sprang forward to clasp her in his arms. The wildest confusion raged for a few seconds. Shouts of "Kill! Kill! in the King's name!" were heard coming up behind, mingled with frantic clamours for Ingeburge's blood. But the soldiers were gaining ground, and their swords were cutting a ghastly path through the mob, towards the door of the cell.

Eric, thinking that the climax had come, turned on Mahmoud with his dagger raised, saying between his teeth:

"I swore you should not see the Queen die!"

He made a desperate thrust at the Syrian, but, as if by magic, the captive sprang to his feet and wrenched the weapon out of his assailant's hand with such force that Eric slipped on the blood-stained floor and lay stunned at the Moslem's feet.

Without regarding anyone else, Mahmoud-el-Reis made straight for the Queen and flung one arm round her, throwing Eve to the ground as he did so, and with the other he brandished Eric's dagger.

Tristan, ever mindful of Eve, bent down to steal a kiss from her unconscious lips, but his gallantry cost him dear.

Albret's sword descended with a well-aimed force on the head of his former comrade, and the King of the Basoche, fell beside the girl he had sought so eagerly.

Having settled this personal account, Albret turned to intercept the course of Mahmoud-el-Reis, but a thrust from the Syrian's dagger laid him low, and the son of the desert pursued his way with flashing eye and dilated nostril, bearing the unconscious form of the Queen still before him. The quickness and dexterity of his movements seemed to paralyse those who would have opposed his passage, and soldiers and tramps alike gave way before him.

For a moment he was seen in the glare of the flames, the dark Moslem and the white Queen, his blood-stained dagger raised aloft against the dark background of struggling humanity, and then he vanished, leaving on the air the sound of his fierce war-cry:

"There is but one God, who is God, and Mohammed is His prophet!"

As these words fell upon the dying ear of Tristan the Scholar, he made a last effort to look at Eve, then sinking back, murmured faintly:

"*Vitaque cum gemitu fugit sub umbras.*"

So he died, faithful to his oath, speaking Latin to the last, having lost his life for a kiss, and staked his all upon the chance of seeing her, who, perhaps, had things been different, might have won him back to the life of honour he had still the grace to admire.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE LILAC WITCH.

"It can't be as bad as that, Sophie. Must your father have twenty thousand francs by the first of June?"

"Yes, Henri, or else"—her lip quivered a little—"or else the mortgage will be foreclosed, and father will lose all his land, and we shall be homeless."

"Not if I'm here," said Henri stoutly.

Sophie looked proudly at him, and then at the walls of the studio. What an artist Henri was!

She came to him, and laying her hand gently on his shoulder, gazed sadly into his eyes and said:

"I know, Henri, I know. But then you are poor now."

"I shall rise—get a picture into the Salon—make money——"

"Yes, dear; but if papa loses all his property, and besides—" and her grey eyes grew moist and she looked wistfully away.

"And besides?" repeated Henri with anxious inquiry.

"And, besides, papa has been hinting at the marriage proposals of Jean Bertrand, an old playmate of mine, who offers to pay off all the mortgage on the day of his betrothal to me."

"To you, Sophie! you don't mean that you—that your father——"

Sophie looked down sadly at a pair of neat little feet.

"Henri, you know I love you, and that I have promised faithfully to be your wife; but think of poor papa, and think of all I owe him—ought I not to be ready to make any sacrifice that will save him from ruin?"

"Sophie," he exclaimed, after a pause. "I have thought of a plan. We, you and I, can earn that twenty thousand."

"Yes, yes; how?"

"Why, you be my model, and I'll paint you."

"Oh, will you? But—but you couldn't sell a picture of me for twenty thousand francs."

In answer Henri drew her before a little square mirror hung between two windows, and made her look at her own reflection.

"See there, Sophie! just look at your eyes—are they not the deepest grey, with golden lights in them? are not your lips as red as this carmine? and just see that little pointed chin! how I could paint that! and those pink cheeks—fresh as a baby's!"

Sophie began to blush at Henri's enthusiasm, and turning from the glass looked into his dark face, which was lit up with a glow of almost poetic inspiration.

"And, you know," he went on, "something tells me that I shall paint you better than I ever painted anything before—that you will be my inspiration. You must wear a loosely fitting, very soft lilac robe, and you will have your hair down, hanging over your left shoulder, which will peep through your curls like a white dove in a golden cage. And you must hold a spray of lilac in your hand and be reclining under a lilac-bush, and I'll call you the 'Lilac Witch.'

"Did you ever hear the legend of the 'Lilac Witch'? Grandma used to love to tell me about her; she was a very beautiful fairy, and men came round to catch a smile from her red lips, and the man she smiled on was made bold to do great deeds; but if his heart were drawn to another woman, in a moment she spoilt all he had done, and made a beggarly wretch of him. Besides, you know, the lilac will go well with your complexion, and hair, and eyes."

And so it was planned. He threw the whole of his poetic soul into his work, striving to get that longing, inspiring look in the large grey eyes, which, mingled with an expression, half of pity, half of triumph, in the rest of the face, was to make up the ideal of the "Lilac Witch." He found the look of longing and inspiration in Sophie's eyes, but the pity and triumph—that divine mixture of pride in victory and sorrow for the conquered—were wanting. By his own talent Henri created them, inspired by his love and the prize set before him.

One day in May she was telling him of the importunities of Bertrand, when he interrupted her.

"Very good for M. Bertrand," he said. "But I have something to tell you."

Then he told her how the agent of a rich Englishman was looking all over Paris for paintings of beautiful women; how he had seen the "Lilac Witch," now nearly finished, and how he had, with an Englishman's extravagance, offered the fabulous sum of thirty thousand francs.

That ended the sitting for that day, for Sophie insisted on taking Henri at once to her father to tell him the news, and to make him break off all further negotiations with Jean Bertrand.

It was arranged that Henri was to pay off the mortgage as soon as the picture was transferred, keeping the surplus of ten thousand to start life with Sophie, while her father dismissed Jean Bertrand, with the precautionary hint that, in case the Englishman should fail them, he would immediately accept Bertrand's offer.

It was the evening before the next day when the

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GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

It is a matter for congratulation that obesity is taking its proper place as a disease, and is receiving that scientific attention which it has long lacked. It does not follow that a person needs to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that anyone can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treating for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principle, if it has become at all firmly fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious that there ought to be no difficulty about their acceptance when once they become known; and, as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. It is marvellous how this "Pasteur" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce as much as 14lb. in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book only costs 3d., and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really worth reading.—*Southport Visitor.*

CORPULENCE

INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

Many of our readers are, doubtless, familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of that now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging inform us, through the pages of society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past, at fashionable gatherings, as intoxication; and, no doubt, it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text-book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West End fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had (post free) by sending three penny stamps to Mr Russell's offices, as above; and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competition to make one's way in the world, or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his *modus operandi*, and supplies the receipt for his preparation.—*Bicester Herald.*

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picture was to be formally sold, and thirty thousand francs handed over, and Henri and Sophie married. Henri was in the studio standing before a picture. In one hand he held a lighted cigarette. In the other an acutely pointed paint brush. He was scrutinising the face of his beloved "Lilac Witch" with a look of intense exultation. Every now and then he would make an infinitesimal stroke with the brush, after which he would take a long pull at the cigarette. He was putting on what he called the last touches before he said good-night to the picture and went to call on Sophie. He looked at his watch. It was already past nine and he had promised to be there at eight. Still there were only a few more tiny touches needed and then he would go. He lit another cigarette, he walked up and down the room, changed the lamps and surveyed the painting from twenty different points of view. Finally he seemed satisfied, threw down the brush, drew a sofa up in front of the easel and lay there, watching the Witch's face with a lover's rapture. His chest heaved, his eyes grew bright, the muscles round his face softened into an expression of supreme delight.

Suddenly he started and looked at his watch. It was twelve o'clock and he had forgotten, and Sophie had probably gone to bed, wondering why he never came. He blamed himself for being so thoughtless.

This changed the current of his thoughts, reminding him that to-morrow he married Sophie, and they would always live together; a bright smile lit up his face, but it was a commonplace smile compared to his look of a few seconds ago.

Yes; to-morrow Sophie would be his, and they would come and pay him thirty thousand francs and take away the "Lilac Witch." Take away the "Lilac Witch"? Why, of course; he only painted it for the sake of marrying Sophie.

Henri looked away from the picture with a dull ache of his heart. Somehow, life with Sophie when the "Lilac Witch" was gone did not seem so sweet as it used in the days when they had the first sittings. Then the picture only meant to him the portrait of his dear Sophie. Now, when he was gazing into that fair, arch face on the canvas, so triumphant and yet so pitying and tender, he never thought of its being Sophie's face at all. He seemed to see there something that was all his own, and had come out of his own soul. How could he bear to part with it? But he was winning Sophie by giving it up. A horrible doubt came to him. What if after all he should love the picture better than the model? He shook his head resolutely, and went to bed. All that night in his dream that awful thought tormented him.

On the morrow Sophie appeared before the hour of the business transaction, in order to tidy up the studio and make it look more festive. She found Henri there before the picture as usual. He had wheeled the easel up near the window and was devouring the painting with his eyes. He never so much as turned his head to greet her.

Henri looked long at the face, and then turned and glanced half timidly, half hopefully, at Sophie. She thought she caught his meaning and smiled back at him.

"Is it like?" she laughed.

Henri's face lost the look of hope. He turned eagerly back to the picture, looked at it a minute, then turned away with a sigh. Sophie came to him, and looking over his shoulder at the lovely picture of herself, asked him why he sighed. He answered:

"Ah, Sophie, you cannot understand, you cannot know the feeling of adoration which an artist has for something into which he has poured his whole soul. This is my masterpiece. I shall never do anything so good, so rich, so valuable again—no, never! All the strength, all the purity, all the poetry, of my inmost soul are embodied in that one painting, now—now, I must part with it—must say good-bye for ever to what has been meat and drink to me for months past. You cannot know what it has come to mean to me. It is more than a portrait. It is an ideal in which I have lived for months. Oh, where—where shall I find anything to take its place?"

And Henri, kneeling before the figure, spread out his hands in supplication. Sophie knelt beside him, and gently passing one arm over his shoulder, whispered softly to him, as if they already knelt before the altar:

"Henri, Henri, here I am! have you not me? Did you not paint that picture to marry me? and now it's done, we are to be married, and you are to have me always?"

She paused. Henri slowly looked round and gazed long and steadily, with a blank, searching look into her sweet, pale face. Then he turned towards the "Lilac Witch," shuddered, and sorrowfully shook his head. He noticed that in a spot near the edge of the canvas the varnish had worn a little rough. He got up from his knees, and pushing aside a curtain, went into a side room to get a pot of varnish.

Sophie remained motionless, kneeling before the picture, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing, her hands clutching convulsively at her dress. She repeated his last words:

"Where shall I find anything to take its place?"

Jealousy, as cruel as the grave, jealousy of her own idealised self, jealousy of the image of her own person reflected in the artist's imagination, was taking hold of her. Oh, how she hated the picture that had stolen her only possession! had cheated her of Henri's love. She arose and looked savagely at the "Lilac Witch." Then, glancing wildly round the room for a weapon, she spied on a little table Henri's mixing-knife. It was of steel, and quite sharp. She ran to it, seized it, and then coming up so close that her hot breath made the canvas moist, she hissed:

"There, you thief!" and with a few strokes of the knife, she cut and slashed the lovely face, and tore out the grey eyes, and hacked the poor head and bosom into shreds. Then throwing back her head, she stood upright, panting and trembling, before her disfigured rival.

At that second it seemed as if the scornful, pitying, triumphant look of the "Lilac Witch" had passed into her own face.

Just then came a rustle of the curtain and a rattle at the door. Henri slipped in quietly from the inner room, and Sophie's father came bustling in from the hall. The two men came forward and greeted one another cordially; then they turned towards Sophie and the picture.

With a sharp cry Henri bounded forward, and pressing his forehead against the mutilated painting, cried like a child.

Sophie looked wildly about, and staggered towards her father. He roughly led her to a chair.

Then pulling his hat down over his ears, he said hoarsely, half aloud:

"I must go and find Jean Bertrand."

F. M. L.

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

I WISH to draw special attention this week to the new War Competition, of which particulars will be found in another part of this number. The fact that most of the names indicated by the pictures have already appeared in the daily papers make the Competition of special interest.

P. O. writes to say that he has been looking up the subject and finds that more robberies of letters take place in August and September than during any other part of the year. How is it?————Probably this is attributable to the fact that those months form the holiday season, when a much greater amount of money is transmitted by post.

S. C. W.—There is still room in Westminster Abbey for the burial of another eighty or ninety persons, and, taking the average of the last century, it will be a long time yet before these places are filled up.

YOUNG MOTHER.—The average baby is sensible to light, touch, temperature, smell, and taste on the first day of its existence. Hearing comes on the third or fourth day. Speech should begin by the end of the first year.

MINERVA, T. T., and Others.—It is astonishing what a number of my readers are victims to extreme nervousness. The following is a simple cure suggested by an old doctor of our acquaintance. Devote half-an-hour a day to absolute rest in a darkened room. Lie down, close your eyes, and refuse to be disturbed by any one for thirty minutes. The method is certainly simple enough, and, where possible, at any rate deserves a trial.

F. P.—"Escroquerie" is a crime in France which has no distinct counterpart in England. When a person orders any goods for which they are unable to pay, they are arrested and imprisoned, as the French see no great difference between running off with an article and getting it without paying for it.

B. L. E.—The most expensive war, viewed from the point of yearly expenditure, was the United States Civil War, on which the expenditure was at the rate of three hundred and fifty millions per annum. The Franco-German War stands next highest, its cost having been at the rate of three hundred and sixteen millions per year.

ANCIENT.—The viking ship that was found in a mound on the shores of Christiania fjord is the oldest sailing craft in existence. It is one thousand years old.

H. G.—The only countries in the world where the horses outnumber the human beings are Algeria and the district of the River Plate.

SAXON writes: "Is there any meaning attached to the prefix of 'O',' so common to Irish names?"————It is an abbreviation of the word "ogha," meaning grandchild, so that originally O'Brien signified, "grandson of Brien," and so on.

H. M.—No, Chinese cannot be telegraphed; figures have to be used corresponding to certain words. Only one-eighth of the words of the language are in this code, but this has been found sufficient for practical purposes.

D. S. asks: "Why is the pineapple such an expensive fruit in this country?"————Because it requires such a great amount of care and attention and expense to rear. The fruit requires to be grown in hot-houses specially devoted to it, and great care has to be taken to preserve a certain temperature. Then, again, each plant produces only a single fruit and then dies; the suckers, however, become bearing plants for a subsequent year.

P. P.—The huge guns of modern navies can be fired only about seventy-five times, when they become worn out.

TIME.—The Christian Era, as a basis for reckoning time, was not invented until the sixth century. It was ordered to be used by bishops at a council held in 816, but it was not generally used till much later. Charles III. of Germany was the first to use the words "in the year of our Lord" on documents; that was in 879.

R. N.—No bird of prey has the gift of song; such birds have developed rapidity of flight, and sharp sight, which are more useful. You cannot imagine a warbling vulture, for instance.

J. M.—No; it is not the ground that is on fire. Near the Caspian Sea there are tracts of land where natural gas issues from the soil; this has at some period been set on fire, and has been burning so long that the natives call it "eternal fire." In some instances, this gas occasionally collects on the surface of the water, and when set on fire, you would at first glance imagine that the water was burning.

S. P.—The Palolo is a sea-worm found in the South Pacific Ocean; the natives bake and eat them. These worms are exceedingly brittle, and if broken in many pieces, each piece swims off as if it were an entire worm.

ANNIE.—You probably mean the shawl that belonged to Charles X. of France. It was made from the fur of Persian cats; many thousands of cats' skins were utilised, and the weaving is said to have taken years. It measured eight yards square, but it was so fine that it could be compressed into the space of a large tea cup.

H. I.—It is stated that the list of dowries carried from the United States by American wives to England of recent years, in the case of only fourteen women, amounts to over six and a quarter millions sterling.

S. H. asks: "How is it that plants growing near the sea have thicker leaves than those growing inland?"————Apparently the sea salt is the cause of this phenomenon, as plants cultivated in artificially-salted soil produce thicker leaves.

EX.—"Spondulix" is certainly a slang term for money, but, like some other slang terms now out of date, it is taken from some correct word in another language. In this case it is the Greek *Spondulos*, the name of a shell that was at one time used as money both in Greece and Egypt.

GLOBE has been told that there is a portion of the earth's surface where a person's shadow falls in two directions at the same time, and he would like to know if that is true.————Not if the shadow is cast by either the sun or the moon. In the tropics it happens that on certain days and at certain positions along the line of the sun's apparent path, it is exactly overhead at noon, and in these circumstances a man stands literally on his own shadow. It follows that a slight inclination of the body either way would throw a shadow in that direction. A cursory observation of this fact has probably given rise to the statement made to you.

WHISKERS.—The ceremony observed in the House of Lords when a new peer, by right of succession, takes his seat is quite a simple one. All he has to do is to present his writ of summons to the clerk, swear the oath of allegiance, and make his bow to the Lord Chancellor.

ALIEN.—For a foreigner to become a naturalised Britisher only costs about £6, but he must have been living in this country for about five years, or have been in the service of the Crown for a similar period.

BOOKWORM.—The first dictionary of which there is any record is the Chinese work compiled by Pa-out-she, who lived about 1100 B.C. It contains about 40,000 characters, mostly hieroglyphic and not unlike the signs of the zodiac.

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WHY THE MILL STOPPED.

Down in Norfolk one beautiful summer day, having an hour to kill while waiting for a train, I amused myself by watching a windmill on a near-by hillside. Round and round went the great sails, so many revolutions to the minute, for a long time. Inside the mill the big stones rumbled and roared as they ground the grain. Ever and anon the miller came to the door of the upper story, looked at the sails and the sky, and then went back, like the little sentinels that come and go on the ramparts of intricate mechanical clocks.

It was the peacefulest of pictures. Not a blessed thing in all that landscape seemed to be moving save the regularly-rotating arms of that old mill. Even their shadows on the ground appeared to drag, as though weary of the effort to keep up. What on earth should people want of flour, or, indeed, of anything except a place to sleep, in a country as dead and dull as that? I was about dozing off myself when, glancing again at the mill, I remarked that the sails were going slower, and slower, and slower. Ten minutes later they stopped.

Had the man in the mill shut down on them from the inside? Was the grain all ground and the day's work done? What! at three o'clock in the afternoon? Nonsense; no. The wind had entirely died out; not a breath of air was stirring. And even though fifty farmers were waiting for their grist, *no windmill will go without wind.*

Now here are two letters written by women. I have been reading them over; they interested me. But could I make them interest you? Possibly, I said to myself, if I could only think of an illustration that would bring out the point, which is the same in both. Have I done it? You shall answer that question after you have read the letters and the comment that is to follow.

"For many years," runs the first, "I suffered from indigestion and weakness. I felt tired and weary. I had a bad taste in the mouth, my tongue being thickly coated. My appetite was poor, and what little food I ate did not agree with me, causing me pain at the chest and stomach. I saw a doctor, and took medicines from time to time, but got no good from anything until I read about the benefit many persons had obtained from Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Saunders, chemist, and after taking it I felt much better, the pain and nervousness being removed. I could eat better, and was stronger every way. If I ever ail anything I take a few doses of the medicine, and it never fails to set me right. I have recommended it to many, and you can make use of this statement as you like. (Signed) (Mrs.) Margaret Ledner, Prospect House, St. Lawrence, Ramsgate, January 28th, 1897."

"In the early part of 1894," says the second, "I suffered severely from indigestion. I had a bad taste in the mouth, my appetite was bad, and all the food that I took gave me pain at the chest. I was constantly belching gas, and had pain at my left side around the heart. I got extremely weak, and was unable to do anything. Nothing that I took did me any good until I began taking a medicine that had benefited my mother, called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. After taking this medicine a short time my appetite improved, and the food agreed with me, and I gained strength. I know many persons who have benefited by the same medicine. You can publish this statement if you think fit to do so. (Signed) (Mrs.) Harriett Folton, Durlock, Minster, near Ramsgate, January 28th, 1897."

Now let me make you a comprehensive proposition which, I think, will cover the matters we have in hand. All motion comes from power, and all power from heat produced by combustion. Whether the power be moving air, steam, electricity, or running water, it is the same. Human strength, human power, result from food digested or consumed (slowly burned) in the body. The *opposite* of this is called indigestion, or dyspepsia—the disease from which these ladies suffered. That is why they were weak, tired, weary, and unable to do anything. They were as engines are when the fire is out; as water-mills are when the streams are dry; as our windmill was when the breeze fainted.

Mother Seigel's Syrup re-kindled the fire, drove away the deadening disease, and health, life, and motion began again. Do we understand it now? I think so.

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OU SHOULD GO IN FOR OUR WAR COMPETITION.

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 490. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 21ST, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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Short Stories

Edited by J. Arthur Pearson.

No. 490.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending May 21st, 1898.

The Flawed Amethyst.

Neil Boyd had been telling tiger stories, and Willie Adams was half through with a yarn concerning a snake that lived in the colonel's compound at Durrumtollah, Sir George, who had shot tigers himself and heard the snake story before ever Adams had landed at the Apollo Bunder, was reading the *Globe*. A sudden and somewhat forcible exclamation from the Baronet interrupted the snake story, and drew upon Sir George the attention of every pair of eyes in the room.

"Anything fresh, George?" inquired Hamilton Graham, Sir George's brother. "Any news of Richards?"

Captain Richards, R.E., an old college mate of the Grahams, had gone on a surveying expedition into the country beyond the Jelum; and, not having returned when expected, many were the rumours concerning him.

"Not a word, Hamilton. But Jimmy's a lucky dog—always was since I knew him. He'll come out right, you'll see, when all's over. No, nothing about Richards. Pinaud's was broken into on Monday night, and the manager shot while attempting to prevent the thieves from getting possession of the keys of the safe."

"Pinaud's?"

"Yes, Pinaud's!—the big jewellers in the Rue de la Paix. Why 'twas only on Saturday that I showed you in their window the amethyst which a dozen years ago I bought from a Hindoo fakir in the fruit market at Singapore."

"Anything extraordinary about that?" queried Boyd, when Hamilton remained silent.

"About what?" asked Sir George.

"The burglary."

"Yes, I think so," returned the Baronet drily, "and p'raps you'll think the same, Neil, when you've heard the story."

"Tell us the tale then, old chap, if it's like that," said Boyd, settling himself down for a smoke; and Sir George, who preferred pig-sticking to story-telling, and would rather ride ten miles any day to shoot a tiger than sit down quietly for ten minutes to tell how it was done, didn't wait for pressing, but actually started at once.

"A dozen years back," he began, "I was spending a few weeks in Singapore. You know the sort of crowd one meets there—Malays, Javanese, Jews, Turks, Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, Cingalese, Hindoos: halfcastes out of the South, halfcastes out of the East—the most motley medley to be found in any single spot on the broad bosom of this weary old planet—though I won't say but what in the variety and diversity of its items, the Praya at Hong Kong doesn't run Singapore very close.

"Strolling through the fruit market early one morning, I was accosted by a fakir of the type one sees at the bathing *ghats* in the holy city of Benares. Throwing himself at my feet, he produced from his dirty loin cloth a still dirtier roll of muslin. Unfolding it, he disclosed a thin strip of leather, which before opening I knew would reveal an assortment of gems which he was offering for sale.

"His collection was not very large. A few diamonds cut smooth after the fashion of the Orient, a few sapphires, a pearl or two, half-a-dozen emeralds and three remarkably fine uncut rubies.

"It was the rubies that attracted my notice, and if the price was right I was disposed to purchase.

"Lal Singh named his figure, and from another corner of his scanty waist cloth, producing a second piece of dirty rag, exhibited an amethyst of a size uncommonly large, and of the softest and purest colour. The value and appearance of the stone, however was injured, I thought, by a flaw, which ran obliquely across the face

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of it, giving it a very singular, not to say bizarre appearance.

"The amethyst and the rubies, I found, went in the same parcel. But, while something of a curio, certainly, I had no use for the violet-blue stone, and said so; but the old beggar was obdurate. If I took the rubies, I must take the amethyst; if I declined the amethyst, I couldn't have the rubies. Eventually, I bought the lot, the amethyst being put in at a price that made no difference; and I went off to my hotel satisfied that I had secured a bargain.

"Two days afterwards, my room at the Grand Oriental was entered, and the rubies and a few other articles stolen. But, with a nice appreciation of circumstances, the flawed amethyst was considerately left. The thief I put down as Lal Singh himself; the police, more probably, that he was merely the instigator thereof. Anyway, his dusky person vanished straightway from the bazaars and alleys of Singapore, and was seen by me no more, during my stay at the Straits Settlements.

"On the amethyst I set no particular value but, as that was all I had to show for the money I'd parted with, I sat looking at it rather ruefully the morning after the robbery, wondering why it had been left when the rubies were taken, and considering what use I could possibly turn it to.

"'Were it not for that unsightly-looking "flaw"' thought I, 'the stone itself isn't a bad one—the colour indeed, is the purest and most delicate of violets; and, when it catches the light, the successive waves of colour, as they pass over the surface, produce an effect that would be perfect but for one thing—that sinister-looking flaw.'

"Yes, the longer I looked at the stone, the more convinced did I become that the flaw on the face of it had an appearance that was decidedly sinister. I hadn't observed it before, but now, as I sat with the thing in my hand and gazed into it, I seemed to see another face grinning back at me through the cleavage of the fracture. Yes, there it was—and the longer I looked the clearer I saw it. Not a human face; no, the face of one of the thirty-three million gods of Hindoostan. But the features varied continually. Now it was Siva the Destroyer, now it was Ganesha, now Hanuman the monkey-god. It was uncanny.

"I admit to a strong strain of Highland blood in the Grahams; but we draw the line at spells, charms and amulets. I put down the stone and took a few turns across the room stopping for a minute before the window; then, coming back to the table I picked up the amethyst again. As I expected, I saw nothing but the long, ugly-looking flaw. For a moment I had fancied that by some piece of diabolical cunning a clever artificer had evolved the likeness of some idol-face out of the lines at the base of the fracture. But no—the face had been evolved by some strange freak of my own imagination.

"I examined the stone closely. There was a queer, 'creepy' sort of a look about the flaw; but I no longer saw any resemblance to a face—human or animal. I was dismissing the matter as a vision of the mind, a mental picture called up by some fantastical arrangement of lines and curves, as the light fell upon the different facets, when a noise in the street below attracted my attention, and I walked to the window, the stone still in my hand.

"A procession was passing. After the last man had gone by, I opened my hand and took another look at the stone. There was Hanuman the monkey-god, grinning at me as plainly as if I were in his own temple at Benares.

"What did it mean? I rubbed my eyes and looked again. There was nothing but the long transverse line of the flaw—stay! Yes, there was Hanuman again. No, it was Ganesha this time, Ganesha the elephant-headed. I locked away the stone and went out for a walk.

"In the native bazaar I saw a lapidary carving a seal; as it happened, the stone was an amethyst, but the colour was cloudy and the cutting very inferior. I decided that I couldn't do better with my specimen than have it converted into a seal. The flaw would be no hindrance to a clever workman, the stone was unusually large; and the cutting of the design would effectually spoil the features of Messrs. Hanuman, Ganesha & Co., which I had again persuaded myself could only be due to a lively fancy provoked by some singular refraction of light through the cleavage of the flaw.

"Next morning, I took the stone to an expert, a Cingalese who did all the best work in the place, and went off for a day's shooting.

"Before leaving the hotel, I had taken a hasty peep at the flawed stone—just for satisfaction's sake. There was nothing to distinguish it from any similar stone in the same condition; and, laughing at the stupid whimseys which foolish fancy had engendered, I wrapped it up and set out. That was the day the end of my thumb was carried away through a gun accident, while after peafowl; and the first thing I saw on going to my room in the evening was the box containing the flawed amethyst. It had been returned by the jeweller with an excuse quite too elaborate to be genuine. I was the first man in his shop in the morning.

"After much fencing and dodging he told me that the stone was considered to be unlucky—and more than that it was impossible to get out of him.

"Unlucky, was it? Well, certainly I had lost three rubies and the top of my thumb since it came into my possession.

"I went to another lapidary, but before I'd got a hundred yards from his shop, his boy was begging me to return. It was the same story, only more so—lies, excuses, what you will first; and then, the real reason: 'Ver sorree, sahib, but him no lucky. Not for ten tousand rupee, sahib. Him no good stone; no lucky, sahib, no lucky.'

"I put the stone in my pocket, and went to an English cutler's in the town where I had purchases to make. While examining some razors I managed to give myself an ugly gash with the blade. 'That confounded stone,' I muttered, looking at my bandaged thumb. 'My thumb yesterday, my finger to-day; to-morrow, perhaps, my neck.'

"At the first opportunity I stole another look at the stone. The flaw had that queer sort of uncomfortable suggestion about it which I had noticed before; but I could see nothing resembling a face looking out of the stone. Confound the thing! what was the matter with it?

"Next day I walked off to the old lapidary I had seen in the native bazaar; but with a curt shake of his venerable head and a brief 'no, sahib, no,' he returned me the stone.

"There was an English jeweller in Stamford Raffles Street and away I trudged to him. I explained what I wanted done. He examined the stone carefully, spend-

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ing a considerable time over it, while I scrutinised him narrowly. 'Funny stone, isn't it?' he said, putting down the glass he had been using and eyeing me curiously. 'Queer sort of flaw, that. Can't quite make it out.'

"'What's the matter with it?' I asked carelessly.

"'I don't know,' said he, 'but—well, I could have sworn I saw a face look at me out of the stone.'

"'A face?' said I 'what sort of a face?'

"'Well,' he replied, 'I didn't see it again when I looked through the glass; so p'raps it was only fancy.'

"'Must have been,' I said, though his words had nearly brought my heart into my mouth.

"'You can leave it,' he said, 'till to-morrow, and I'll let you know what we can do with it.'

"When I called on the following day, he handed it to me with the observation that not one of his cutters—natives all—would touch it.

"It was bewitched, it was unlucky. It was this, it was that. So the flawed amethyst came back to me.

"I thought I would get Peters, my man, a long-headed, hawk-eyed Lowland Scot, to look at it; and tell me if he saw anything amiss with it.

"'There's something wrong, sir, with that "stone,"' was his verdict, delivered very impressively, as he returned it to me. But what he saw in it I couldn't get him to say, beyond the emphatic utterance of the awesome word—'devils.'

"That night, before locking the stone away—it was my purpose then to bring it to England, where, I told myself, the jewellers would not be so idiotically absurd as to refuse a job on so flimsy a pretext—that night, I forced myself to look at the stone steadily by the light of an Osler reading lamp. At the end of five minutes, the face of Siva began to show—Siva the Destroyer—blurred at first, then clearer and at last quite plain. No sooner, however, had I recognised Siva, than it was the monkey-god, Hanuman, who was mowing and grinning at me.

"The perspiration was standing in great drops upon my forehead, and, forgetting my previous resolution to take the stone home, I flung the thing from me, careless whither it fell; and undressing rapidly, got into bed.

"Some hours after, I was roused by cries of 'Fire!' The room was full of smoke. Half suffocated, I was dragged out, and the flames extinguished by the attendants. The reading lamp was found smashed upon the floor. How it came there, I haven't a notion.

"During the remainder of my stay at Singapore, I left the flawed amethyst religiously alone. Where it had fallen, there it might stay. I made no search after it, or induced any to be made; and when, at the beginning of the following week, I started for Hong Kong, I cherished the hope that, if Peters had come across the crystal in putting my things together for shipment, he had tactfully contrived, with a due regard for prejudice, to leave the unclean thing in the dust of the corner where it lay. He had said nothing to me about it; and I made up my mind I would say nothing to him.

"The run to Hong Kong would have been pleasant enough but for the fear of that stone turning up unexpectedly. It haunted me like a nightmare. When we dropped anchor in Hong Kong harbour, I felt perfectly wretched—all because of that miserable stone. What had become of it? I would have given a pocketfull of sovereigns to know; yet I was too proud to inquire of Peters, and he had never mentioned the 'deil's stane' since the day when he had given his verdict against it.

"I began to wish I had never seen the thing. It was getting on my nerves. I couldn't rid myself of the dread of it.

"I got into the boat that was to take us to the landing wharf, feeling as if a millstone were round my neck; and, looking up at the terraced roads which cut the face of the Peak, wished it was dear old Devon and the long white terraces on Plymouth Hoe.

"I suppose I got up too soon and overbalanced myself; anyway, before I could spring ashore at the wharf, I'd gone over—hat box in one hand and dispatch box in the other. The former fell back into the boat, the latter went under with me and was not recovered till days after. That blessed amethyst had found a lodging in my hat box, when I flung it across the room—the box was standing on the floor with the lid partly off. Peters had never seen it, so he tried to make me believe.

"Well, after that, what do you think? I went straight off to a Chinese dealer to whom I had been directed as a man who would buy the devil's horns if he could make a profit on them; and, after the usual 'haggle,' the stone changed hands. I had no compunction about selling it to friend 'John,' and the price was nothing. But the transaction was peculiar.

"'John' looked hard at the crystal, and, at one time I thought he was going to refuse; but presently, a grim smile overspread his yellow features—I wondered what was the particular idea which had given birth to it—and he agreed to purchase. The transfer however was effected in a manner that struck me as decidedly singular.

"Three joss sticks were produced, round which a priest had wound strips of red paper stamped with a yellow dragon. Three, you know, is the Chinese lucky number. These joss sticks were then handed to me, and it was explained that the sticks would be bought at the price named for the stone, which could be thrown into the scale as a sort of make-weight to the bargain.

"The 'lucky sticks' would subsequently be burnt before the altar of the Earth god.

"Well, that is a dozen years ago now, and I had almost forgotten the incident of the flawed amethyst, when, passing up the Rue de la Paix last Saturday with Hamilton, I saw the identical stone in Pinaud's window. We stopped to look at it. It was the same stone that I sold to Sin How at Hong Kong, twelve years ago, and in exactly the same condition. I had half a mind to go in and make some inquiry about it; but Hamilton dissuaded me. That there is some subtle connection between that unlucky stone and the shooting of Pinaud's manager, I am fully convinced; but how, why and wherefore, it would puzzle Solomon to explain.

"I have told my story," concluded Sir George, after a pause, "if any person feels equal to fording the stream, let him wade in."

But a great silence had fallen upon the room.

H. HUNTER.

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A PLAIN GIRL'S STORY.

"MR. RALPH DECKER is coming home from Queensland on a visit, and Aunt Mary says he is looking for a wife. What a chance for the Malsham girls!" laughed Kitty Rand; and she turned a bright, dark face, full of mischief, to her handsome, blonde sister Jean.

"We will give him an opportunity to judge of the beauty and grace of Malsham, won't we, dear?" laughed back the fair Jean. "As to finding a wife, why he must take his chances like the others who have come and gone—eh, Kitty?"

The two-seated, o'd-fashioned trap toiled on up the hill with the two handsome daughters on the back seat; and in front, with the kind-hearted, care-worn, farmer-father, sat the middle sister, Bess, small and brown and plain, except for a pair of large, demure, and thoughtful eyes.

"Father, dear, tell us about Mr. Decker," begged Jean. "He lived in Malsham when he was a boy. You must have known his father."

The farmer, thus suddenly addressed, flicked at the road-side ferns with his whip, and cleared his throat suspiciously before he could reply to the careless question. Quick-eyed Bess glanced at him keenly from under her long lashes.

"Something is the matter with father," she said to herself. "What can it be?"

Bessie was glad when they reached the farm, and her father had gone to the barn. She was her father's girl, every one said. Retiring, reticent and silent before strangers, she was the family sunbeam, thoughtful, patient and bright, with interest in all pleasant things at home. When the young men who came to see Jean and Kitty were set aside for newcomers, they sometimes took refuge in Bessie's society, but they never sought her first, though she was only a year Kitty's junior. Somehow her mouth felt parched when she tried to talk to them and she could only answer in commonplaces.

Down in the depths of he loving heart sweet Bessie wondered if it would always be so. Would she always be passed by for her pretty sisters and never find the one who should understand her? It was hard to be neglected when all her friends were surrounded.

Bessie hastily ran out to the barn for a talk with her father. The old barn had been the scene of many such talks; and seated on the hay she and her father had often talked and planned for the good of the family. To-night, the tired man knew that she would follow him, however he tried to evade her.

"Now, father, dear, you know that you have to tell me, first or last."

"Go away, Bessie; there is nothing for a young girl like you to know. I must finish this to-night, and——"

"And I'll help you, dad. What is in that big blue envelope? Tell me the very worst of it, please."

The worst of it was quite bad enough. Worse than Bessie had dreamt. Years ago John Rand's youngest brother, a weak but never vicious boy, had run away, and had only been heard of at long intervals. The news which had come from various parts of the world had always been of a dissipated, profitless life. Brotherly letters remained unanswered, and he heeded not the request to return. This was the one grief of the farmer's life, for the young brother had been dear to him, and it was his cherished hope that one day the prodigal would come back to the home of his fathers, and to a better life.

But Edgar Rand had now caused himself to be heard from in the most unexpected and unwelcome fashion. He had deliberately forged on a bill the name of his brother for a sum so large, that the last penny of value on the little farm and the small sum laid by for a rainy day in the Grafton bank would just suffice to meet the obligation, as the forger had doubtless discovered in some manner. As matters now stood, the whole affair could be settled without publicity; but how could John Rand meet the trial?

To sell the home of his fathers would break his heart. No other place would be home to him; and to borrow a large sum of money, even if it were possible to do so, would involve a debt which would burden his whole life, if, indeed, he should live long enough to pay it. The unhappy alternative was open disgrace, the publication to the world of a stain on a hitherto fair name.

John Rand bowed his head, and his frame shook with the depth of his grief, as he finished the story.

"Oh, father, dear, we will find some way out of it; we always have found a way out, you know. Don't take it to heart so, father—don't. Let us be brave and talk it over."

"There is nothing to talk about, Bessie," said the farmer brokenly. "It is all plainly stated in the lawyer's letter, and there are just two weeks more in which to redeem the bill, or disgrace and ruin are upon us! How can Kitty and Jean and your mother bear it?"

Bessie did her best to cheer him, but her heart was heavy and she could see no way out of the trouble, although she forced a smile and pretended to be cheerful.

The next morning, a very small boy, with a big cart and an overgrown horse, was seen coming over the long hill towards the farm-house, and a three-cornered note from Bessie's particular and intimate friend, Miss Polly Waters, requested the pleasure of her company to stay over night, as the family were going away; and Bessie speedily made up her mind to accept the invitation. She resolved to confide a part of the story, at least, to Polly, whose big brother Dan was a solicitor in Grafton; and as the gaunt horse carefully adjusted his awkward proportions to the steep hills, Bessie's thoughts ran far ahead of his slow steps.

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"We can go over to Dan's office this afternoon," said Polly, when she heard the story, her bright face full of sympathy. "I can drive old Bunker, and we'll have a nice ride. Dan will manage it for you," said comforting Polly, whose ideas of financial matters were of the crudest sort.

Old Bunker was jogging away easily, with his head to the ground, when the girls noticed a few drops of rain.

"There is a sprinkle of rain," cried Polly.

"And look at that heavy cloud," said Bessie. "What if it should be a thunder storm, and not a house in sight, and Grafton fully two miles away! There! that's thunder!"

"Old Bunker is afraid of thunder; I never thought of that before," added his mistress. "Just look at him. He knows what is coming."

The gaunt, big horse, had pricked up his ears, and, with head erect, was listening in terror to a distant muttering sound, which came nearer and nearer, and burst in a great peal just over their heads. Polly jumped out and ran to the horse's head in time to save him from a frightened plunge forward, and just then the clouds which had rolled up unperceived behind them, began to pour down a blinding deluge of rain.

Bessie leapt out lightly, and the two hastily wrapped themselves in cloaks. The lightning began to flash in great sheets, and the rain poured down in torrents. They were now on the open road, unprotected by shelter of any kind. The big horse shivered in terror at each fresh peal of thunder, but partly soothed by Polly's coaxing, made no further effort to break away, though steadily refusing to move in either direction. And the storm increasing in fury, gave no signs of a speedy ending.

The girls held a consultation, and Polly insisted that Bessie must go on alone in order to see Dan before he left his office. After considerable hesitation, Bessie agreed, and started off alone on foot, leaving Polly to follow as soon as she could.

Bessie Rand trudged on bravely for about a mile in the face of the storm. Her boots, heavy with water, and clogged with mud, did not move easily over the soaked ground, her head beat and throbbed with the exertion, and her mouth was parched and dry; her cheeks burnt and her hair hung dishevelled about her face.

Just at the cross-roads, and when she felt that she must give up the fight against the elements, a welcome sound greeted her ears, and in a moment a swift-footed horse and a low phaeton came in sight.

The horse's head was turned towards Grafton, and a man, muffled closely from the storm, leant out and in a strange voice courteously offered her a place in the phaeton. Bessie, in her wet garments, breathless and anxious with her errand, gave no thought to the propriety of trusting herself to a stranger, but eagerly accepted the offer and bestowed herself in one corner of the phaeton with supreme thankfulness for the swiftness of the steed that was bearing them towards Grafton.

There was nothing to indicate to the young lady whether her companion was young or old, fair or dark, so thoroughly was he protected from the storm; nothing but a pair of dark eyes, which seldom looked towards her corner. The girl leant back exhausted on the cushions and closed her eyes.

"Do you live in Grafton?" she asked, when she at length opened her eyes.

The question was evidently a surprise, and it was a few minutes before the man answered.

"I am a stranger in this part of the country. I come from abroad. But what brings a young lady like you out in such a wild storm, alone and apparently in such haste?"

The question was as unconventional as her own, and recalled to Bessie all that had been disturbing her. She was never a careless talker, and was notably reticent about her own affairs; but the strangeness and the urgency of the situation seemed to have transformed her.

She scarcely knew herself, and something in the dark eyes compelled her to do what seemed then a perfectly natural and proper thing to do. With the first sound of her voice all the evil that she feared came rushing over her, and in trembling tones and with fast-falling tears she answered question after question in her own straightforward way, until she had told everything—her hopes and fears, the story of her quiet life, and of the old farm, the dear father and the handsome sisters and the dissipated uncle—all to this stranger.

The stranger made a few sympathetic observations, and by that time they were at the solicitor's office.

"Be sure that you tell no one," was Dan's parting injunction, after the whole story had been told, the sister rescued and the two made comfortable.

"But I did tell it to some one," said Bessie regretfully; "and to a stranger. How could I have been so foolish?"

The solicitor was not pleased. He had heard of no stranger in Grafton answering to her description, and it might lead to great mischief. However, it was done and nothing remained but to make the best of it.

Mr. Waters was going away on business and would take the papers with him and see what could be done. In the meantime, Bessie was to tell her father to take courage, and to leave everything for the present to the young solicitor, who had already won a reputation for marked ability.

But the days passed slowly and painfully in the old farm-house. Perhaps they were the last they would spend in the old home, they thought; and never had the woods and the hills looked so beautiful, never had the cheery sitting-room seemed so delightful. The father and daughter held many conferences on the long hillside, and the farmer's sallow cheeks gained new furrows.

Great was the excitement in the little house during the last days of Dan's absence, when a telegram made its unaccustomed way to the Rands. It contained but two words—"All right,"—but since it was signed with Dan's name it meant much.

Two days afterwards, Bessie accepted an invitation to spend a day or two with Polly, as her mother and father would be away. On the second morning, Polly surprised her by saying that her lover, Jack Matthews, was coming to tea, and would bring a gentleman friend with him.

Bessie felt rather nervous at first, but she soon recovered her spirits, and in much friendly chatter the morning and afternoon passed away.

The little tea-table was a marvel of homely beauty, with its fresh roses and dainty viands; and when Jack came in, and introduced his friend, Bessie found herself face to face with the much-talked of Mr. Ralph Decker.

All sorts of embarrassing thoughts rushed into the girl's mind, and made her forget her surprise that he should know Jack Matthews.

Bessie, as usual, could only utter monosyllabic replies;

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and when Jack and Polly slipped away for a few minutes, she could scarcely answer at all.

The young man seemed not in the least embarrassed, but talked on pleasantly enough. It seemed to Bessie that something in his eyes when he spoke looked strangely familiar. He began to talk of the weather, of the lack of rain, of storms, and of a horse he had once owned that would never travel in a thunderstorm and appeared to be maddened by lightning.

"The Waters' have just such a horse," ventured Bessie. "Polly and I were caught in a storm only a few days ago and old Bunker wouldn't stir."

"What did you do then?"

"Oh, we were going to Grafton on important business," she said hesitatingly, "and I had to go on and leave her, until her brother Dan could come after her."

"And did you walk all the way to Grafton?"

"Oh, no," said Bessie innocently. "Just as I came to the cross-roads, an old man in a phaeton came along all bundled up in cloak and rugs and let me ride with him."

Ralph Decker gave a quick side glance at the demure face of his companion, in which honesty and sympathy were plainly written, and he judged it best for his purpose to appeal to the latter. So he straightway heaved a sigh—not a mild, delicate sigh, but a deep drawn, heart-rending affair, which really cost an effort.

"Oh, what is it?" asked Bessie quickly. "Are you ill?"

"No, oh, no." said the young man; "I am not ill, but——" here he leant his head back against the chair, and spoke very gravely: "but it really makes me feel faint to think that, although I am barely thirty, I look so venerable that a young lady like yourself thinks I am an old man."

Bessie's eyes widened and lengthened to an edifying state of roundness, and her companion with difficulty repressed the laughter which would have ruined his cause. Over the young girl's expressive face a light was slowly creeping.

"I believe it was your own self," she said gravely, "and I told you all about my father, and the dreadful bill and all! Dan said it was such a bad thing to do, and it was so unlike me, for I always keep secrets. But I might have told it to someone worse," she added, impolitely and illogically, but in a hopeful tone.

"Doubtless, yes," said Ralph, and he allowed himself a little smile as he saw Bessie's face brightening. "Because, you see, if you would allow me, I am a friend of Dan's, and have known all about your family from my father, and just in the way of business." The young man was growing embarrassed in his turn. "Now, please, don't thank me, Miss Rand, for I really cannot endure being thanked, but I found that I could look after that bill in a way that I will explain to your father, and Dan understands it and says it is all right. I know the man who—er—wrote the bill; I met him abroad! And I know the man who holds it very well indeed."

"My uncle?" whispered Bessie faintly.

"Yes, and I could arrange the affair better than anyone else. I ventured to tell you myself, so that you need not worry about it any more, you know."

Tears and smiles and burning blushes united to make our plain girl almost beautiful, as she lifted her large eyes to meet the young man's gaze.

"I won't thank you," she said slowly, "if you really feel so badly about being thanked, but I do think you, are—uncommonly unusual. And you are a stranger to us all. It is so kind. Father will be so glad, for, in spite of Dan's telegram, we have been very anxious lest we should lose our home. It is about all we have for our old age, you see."

Ralph Decker laughed out loud this time, and Bessie relieved of her burden, laughed too, though she did not know what amused the stranger.

"Do you expect to spend your old age on the farm with your father and mother?" he added quizzically.

"They all expect it," said Bessie, with a cheerful laugh; for she felt so happy, not only because of the freedom from anxiety, but because relief had come through such a pleasant channel, that even a monotonous single life on the hills seemed a subject for congratulation.

But the young man came and sat beside her on the sofa, and said, with a laugh in his eyes, but very earnestly all the same:

"Do you know I have been thinking of a pleasant little home that I know of away in Queensland, and of a lonely man in that little home, and best of all, of a dear little girl, honest and true and tender-hearted, altogether too dear and nice to live alone when she could make such a charming wife. And I have been thinking that if she could forgive a man, as honest and true as herself, I firmly believe, for taking advantage of her frankness when she was in trouble, perhaps she might, in time—not a long time either—come to think rather kindly of this man and of the little home that would so gladly own her as its mistress."

It is quite impossible to guess what answer Bessie would have made, though her eyes shone with a happiness of which she was very much ashamed. But just at this moment Jack and Polly came in, and they all went in to tea. Bessie's eyes rested on his gravely, but with a delightfully pleasant expression.

Like the very wise man that he was, however—and the men are few who really understand the best and the quickest way to a woman's heart—he did not allude to the matter again that day.

He met her three days later near her home, and they met each day for the next week. He told her of his plans and many other things; and Bessie listened, blushed at his words, and thought she must be dreaming, but it was a very happy dream.

And as Ralph Decker was obliged to be back by a certain date, and as there would still be two sisters at the farm-house, and as Ralph loved Bessie with all his heart, which was a large one, and as Bessie could not deny that she regarded him with something much dearer than friendship, it happened that there was a pretty wedding in a very short space of time at the little church under the hill, and all the young men and maidens came, and the plain sister could hardly be told from the pretty ones.

And with blinding tears of sorrow at the parting, and of joy because of her suddenly given rich store of happiness, Bessie said good-bye to the dear home-folks and went away with her big husband to the little home which she long lived to bless.

L. WISCARD WORMS.

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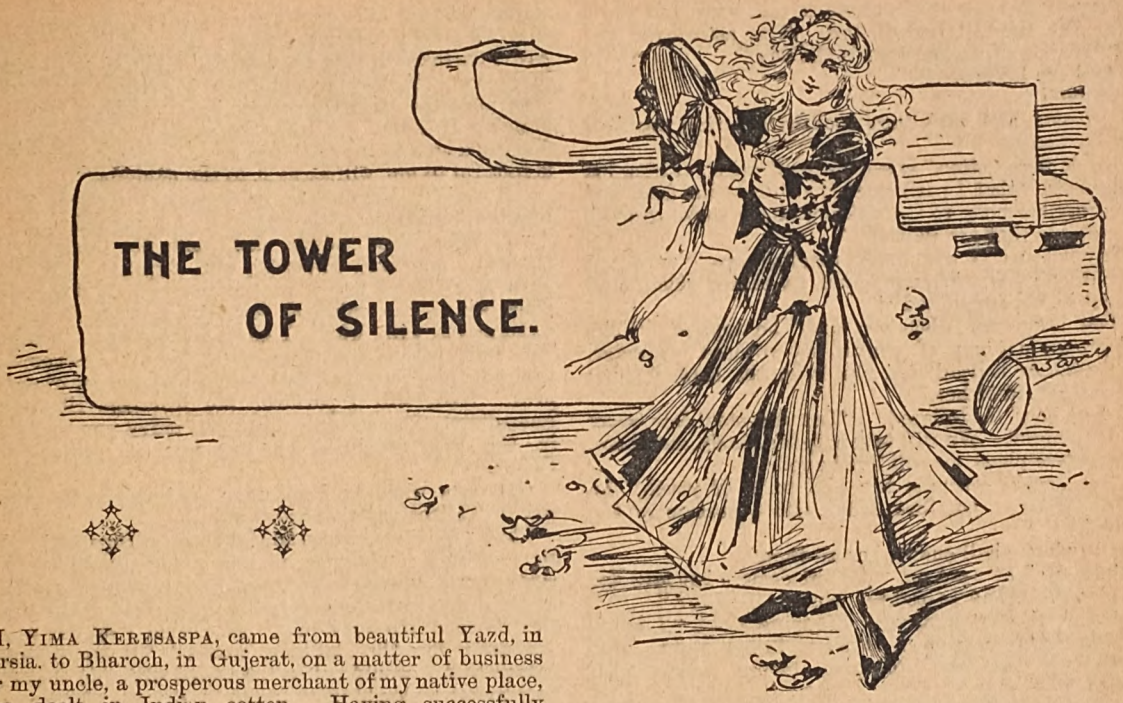

THE TOWER OF SILENCE.

I, Yima Keresaspa, came from beautiful Yazd, in Persia, to Bharoch, in Gujerat, on a matter of business for my uncle, a prosperous merchant of my native place, who dealt in Indian cotton. Having successfully accomplished my mission, I paused on my homeward journey to deliver a letter of introduction to a friend of my uncle's, one Sayuzdri, a *mobed* (priest of the middle order) of our sect, the Shenshai, resident in Bombay.

Arrived in the city, I wandered to the Parsee settlement on beautiful Back Bay beach. The situation was delightful, and as I had become somewhat heated with my walk, I reclined on a rustic seat in the shade of a jungle of palms and allowed my eyes to take in the landscape beauties spread out before them.

I was suddenly aroused by hearing a long-drawn sigh. Turning quickly I saw, not far distant, the most beautiful woman it has ever been my lot to behold.

She was a type of our women, but, oh! it was an idealised type, excelling in all the graces. Her face was wondrous fair, her form delicately rounded in the full blossom of its development, and her hands were small and shapely.

Her eyes were large, lustrous and dark, and looked out over the sea with a sadness and melancholy that pierced my heart. Instinctively I rose and approached her. She looked up, startled, and then the fear fled from her eyes, and the light that filled them flashed into my soul and intoxicated me with the first draught of love.

"Forgive me," I said. "I heard you sigh and was surprised that so much sorrow and beauty should be found together."

"Comeliness," she answered, in a soft voice, "is no armour against sadness, nor is purity of heart a protection from the wiles of the evil-minded. However, it is not meet that I should pass words with a stranger, even though so gentle and so kindly spoken."

She discreetly veiled her face with the folds of silk that hung down over her left arm and turned away.

"Ah, fair one," I murmured, "grant me yet a moment! I come from afar and am seeking the priest, Sayuzdri."

"You know him?" she cried, turning upon me with sparkling eyes, the veil partially dropping away.

"I have that which insures me his friendship," I made answer. "He is an old friend of my uncle's, who lives in distant Yazd."

"He is a good man," she said slowly; "a faithful friend to me. There is his house, yonder."

She pointed to the peak of a dwelling, just visible through the trees.

"When you go to him," she continued, "tell him that it was Ardvi Navazza who directed you, unhappy Ardvi who directed——"

"Yima Keresaspa," I answered, in a rapture of happiness.

"Even so," she responded, again sadly as she replaced the silken folds over her face.

She paused before parting and then extended her small hand. I caught it and pressed it to my lips. I would have held it, but she drew away and disappeared from my sight.

Peerless, unhappy Ardvi! From that moment I loved her with my very soul.

I found Sayuzdri, delivered my letter and was received by him as his son. It may well be imagined that I lost no time in approaching the subject nearest my heart.

"I was directed here, reverend Sayuzdri, by a beautiful maiden who bade me tell you that it was Ardvi, the unhappy, who had performed the service."

"Poor Ardvi," he murmured; "victim of——"

"How," I cried. "What mean you, reverend one?"

His sharp eyes were bent upon me.

"Two weeks from to-morrow," he said, "I shall light

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the lamp of incense at the house of the bride and there repeat the nuptial benediction. The astrologer has consulted the stars, and that is the day."

"And the bride is——"

"Ardvi!"

I groaned and sank into a chair, covering my face with my hands.

"Ah, it were better," cried the good priest, raising his hands aloft, "that I performed the rites of the dead and bore away her body to the dakhma, there to be a prey to the vultures that are waiting!"

"Say not so!" I exclaimed, starting up; "surely, if the maiden's heart has not found its choice, this union will not be consummated?"

"You know not what you say," he replied. "The bridegroom is a man of wealth, but without character. Ardvi's father is dead, and she is in the care of those eager to get rid of her."

"I love her," I declared. "Let me steal her away this very night. We will take ship for Persia, and there, in my native place, we will live happily."

"You speak with the fire and folly of youth," he replied calmly; "you love Ardvi with a passion of the moment."

"But which shall endure for all time."

"And she," he went on, "did she declare her love for you before you had passed ten words together?"

"Alas!" I answered, with drooping head, "I know not whether my passion finds favour in her sight. But it was not her part to pass loving words with another."

"And that other a stranger," he said forcibly. "Do not misunderstand me, Yima. I do not frown upon your love, although the suddenness of its awakening furnishes grave doubts of its constancy. Come to me a week hence. In the meantime, I will see Ardvi, and if she gives her consent to a plan I have long thought of, and you are still in the same mind, something shall be done."

I caught his hands in both my own.

"But," he added, "you are not to see her again until the culmination of our plot, if so it is to be."

Sorely against my will I consented and went away.

At the end of a week I returned, but Sayuzdri had not been successful and held forth little hope; at the same time, he directed me to call upon him again in a day or two. Once more I called, and this time the good man met me with a smiling face, invoking upon me the blessings of Ormuzd.

"You have seen Ardvi?" I asked eagerly.

"I have seen her," he replied, "and if you have courage equal to the passion you profess, all may yet be well."

"My courage, as well as my passion, reverend one," said I, "will bear the test of any trial. Who would not love Ardvi and dare the world for her sake?"

"Headstrong words, my son; and yet, I have observed you well. You come of a good stock. Ardvi is not insensible to the love you profess; even though she might be tempted to doubt—it is so sudden. Listen, Yima! A great and terrible thing is that which we are about to do. If our plot prospers, and I unite your fate with that of Ardvi, it may happen that you have wrongly read your heart and that misery will be visited upon you both. Do not speak! I know what you would say," and thereupon he bowed his head and solemnly recited a prayer for guidance.

The prayer over, Sayuzdri continued:

"There is a drug, my son, whose effect is to throw the one who partakes of it into a trance so like unto death that the wisest cannot detect a sign of life. To-day, Ardvi partakes of this drug and to-night she will seemingly die. In the morning, I will perform the funeral obsequies, the *nassesalars* will bear the body away to Malabar Hill and the stone of parting, and thence you, disguised as a priest and assisted by a young priest who is faithful to me, will carry it to the dakhma."

"How is it possible for us to usurp the offices of the regular attendants of the dakhma?" I queried.

"I have some power and influence among the faithful," answered Sayuzdri, with dignity. "What I have done is neither a profanation nor a dishonour. Once within the dakhma, you will apply to Ardvi the restoratives with which I shall provide you; then you will wait within the stone walls for night to come so that you may return to this house under cover of darkness. Here will I perform the marriage rites, and immediately thereafter a boat will carry you to a ship in the bay which is on the eve of sailing for Persia."

Overcome with joy, I fell upon my knees at the reverend man's feet and thanked him.

That night I remained in the house of Sayuzdri. In the morning, he hurried me into one of the white linen suits worn by the priests. As an additional precaution, my face was partially covered with one fold of the cloth that formed the headdress. After this, I set out without delay for the dakhma, assured by my priestly patron that I would not be interfered with and that the only priest I should meet would be the one who was to act with me.

I shall never forget that morning on Malabar Hill, the strangeness of the adventure fixing each scene and incident upon my mind with an intensity which makes everything as vivid to-day as it was then, a score of years ago.

"Ardvi," I murmured, as I betook myself slowly towards the dakhma, "is to be saved from a fate worse than death, but we are to pass to our happiness only through this temple of the dead!"

I had learnt this much of Ardvi's history. Her mother had been married again and her step-father had forced Ardvi to bear his name. The unfortunate girl was not esteemed in her home as a daughter should be, and she was to be married to a wealthy Hindu, a notorious character in Bombay. As to this alliance, Ardvi had had little to say. Everything had been arranged by her step-father. The Parsees have a law forbidding intermarriages with the natives, but in Ardvi's case it was considered that Parsee laws did not apply, her father not being of that religion. Poor girl! What wonder that, in order to escape the unhappy influences that surrounded her, she was willing to resort to any measure, however desperate?

At the dakhma I was met by a tall figure, hooded in white linen, and was asked if I were the young Persian. I replied in the affirmative and would have spoken further, but the priest laid a finger on his lips and made a gesture which plainly said that he understood all. As we stood there, I looked below and saw the *nassesalars* ascending towards us, bearing the supposed corpse of Ardvi. Before them walked Sayuzdri; behind them came the cortege.

"They have reached the stone of parting," said my companion; "we must descend and meet them."

My nerves tingled with excitement as we advanced towards the waiting group, raised the bier and bore it into the dakhma.

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Already were the vultures flapping their wings and flying towards the Tower.

Within the Tower of Silence, we placed our insensible burden down upon the grating, and I drew the spotless covering from Ardvi's face.

"Is she not beautiful?" I murmured, all the passion of my soul surging to the surface.

As I bent over the form of my loved one, I felt a sudden and strong pressure about my neck, and was drawn forcibly backward and cast upon the floor of the Tower. For a moment, astonishment paralysed my limbs even as my tongue, because of the gripping at my throat, clove to the roof of my mouth. My eyes stared upward and I saw a demonical face bending over me. It was my supposed confederate!

He now disclosed, beneath the white linen vestments, the garb of a Hindu. Upon my breast he placed his heavily-shod foot and twisted with unmerciful strength the folds of the *roomal* which he had cast about my head.

"I will strangle the life from your body!" he hissed. "You thought to trick me out of my prize, but you shall not. You shall die and Ardvi will be mine! I have sworn it!"

How had all this come to pass? As I lay there, helpless and slowly choking to death, I wondered vaguely what had gone wrong with Sayuzdri's plans. I gave up all thoughts of life and resigned myself to my fate; but, suddenly, there came a rush of beating wings and the vultures swooped down upon my enemy and attacked him beak and talon. He was obliged to use his hands in fighting them off and this caused him to release me.

As I sprang up I heard a cry of anguish and rage, and through the legion of flapping wings and brown bodies I saw the bleeding face of the Hindu. He ran madly towards the centre of the dakhma, tripped, fell and plunged wildly against one of the grated tiers. He was blinded by the blood from his wounds and could not see whither he went. Cursing and groaning, the wretched man again rushed forward impetuously, stumbled as before and dashed himself headforemost against the wall of the Tower. Falling to the floor, he lay motionless, with the vultures hovering about him.

Throwing one arm across my face, I hurried forward and fought off the infuriated birds while I knelt a moment at the Hindu's side. My amazement was great when I discovered that he was dead. In his headlong plunge against the rocky wall he had slain himself.

Returning to Ardvi, I hastily applied the restoratives which I had brought. The vultures did not annoy us, the lifeless form of the Hindu claiming their attention, and I soon had the satisfaction of seeing my beloved one open her bright eyes and gaze up into my face.

"Yima," she whispered, "your love is indeed great since you dare so much for me. I will endeavour to prove myself worthy of it."

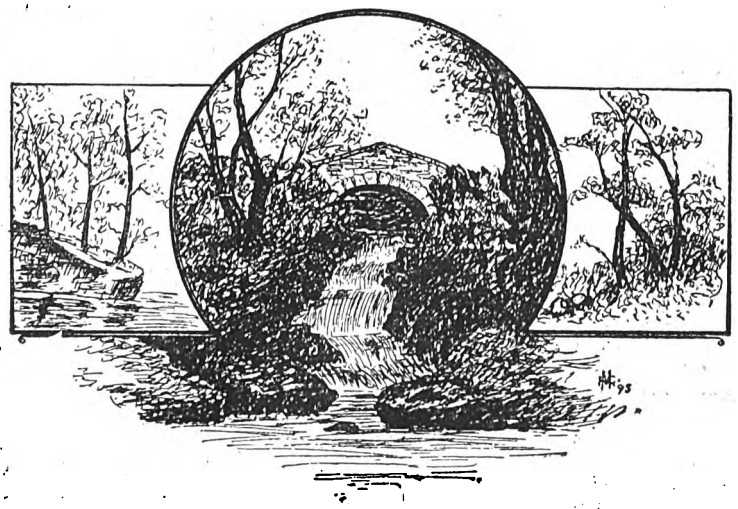
With these words she arose and pressed her lips to my bleeding forehead. Then we hurried to a spot where we should be safe from the vultures.

That night, Ardvi and I, hand in hand, descended Malabar Hill, thankful that our plans had succeeded in spite of all difficulties.

We found Sayuzdri pacing the floor of his dwelling, greatly agitated. The young priest who was to have been my confederate had visited him but a short time before our arrival and had told of being bound hand and foot, in his own home, by a trio of Hindus, one of whom had donned his sacred habit and repaired to the dakhma. The good man heard my story with thankfulness and commended my future days to the care of Ormuzd. How the Hindu, who had met his fate in the Tower of Silence, became possessed of our secret remains unknown to Sayuzdri and myself, even unto this day.

Within a few hours after returning to the home of the good priest, Ardvi and I had been joined in wedlock; and we then took ship for Persia, arriving in due time in safety at Yazd.

W. ROGERSON.



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TWO HATS.

A FLASH of yellow light striking downwards upon a man's face and breast. Faintly visible, behind the light, a dark and tall figure in uniform. Kneeling on the edge of the light another figure also in uniform.

The kneeling man raised his head, bringing his own face into the light.

"Do you know him, Warner?" he asked.

"No," answered the other. "Is he drunk?"

"Dying."

There was a moment's pause. One officer supported the dying man's head, while the other, keeping the light steady upon the stranger, took mental note of his appearance.

He saw a man of nearly fifty. The pallor of death struggled through the bronze hue of the skin. Abundant wavy, grey hair clustered about the forehead, which was broad and high.

The man was dressed in garments of a dark colour. His waistcoat was open, showing a great red stain upon the shirt.

"There's the knife," said Constable Warner, pointing downwards.

Breen picked it up. It was a strange weapon, with a very thin blade, pointed like a needle, yet had a cutting edge. Its appearance suggested the Far East.

"We must carry him to Dr. Borden's," said Breen. "We shall just catch him before he goes to bed."

He bent forward to lift the upper part of the body, and in so doing raised the man's right hand, bringing it into the circle of the light.

"What's he got there?" cried Warner.

Breen took the object from the man's hand. It was a lead-pencil.

"Can he have written anything?" asked Breen. "I don't see any paper."

"Perhaps he scratched something on the stones," rejoined the other, holding his lantern close down to the pavement.

"I can't see anything there," said Breen. "We must not waste this fellow's time looking for it. He hasn't much to spare, and what little he has may be worth a good deal if he can be restored to consciousness."

Hastily lifting the senseless burden, they bore it to the doctor's, and the physician succeeded in restoring the man to consciousness—at least for a moment.

Breen, Warner and the doctor were bending over him when he opened his eyes.

"Speak quick, if you're got any questions to ask," whispered the doctor.

"Who did this?" said Breen, speaking very distinctly.

There was no answer, although there was an indication of comprehension in the man's eyes. The question was three times repeated; then the doctor whispered:

"Try something else. Ask his name."

"Who are you?" asked Breen.

The man made an effort to speak, but the words could not be understood. Breen bent down till his ears almost touched the dying man's lips. The others heard only a faint, muttering sound. Immediately the man's body stiffened; a shudder passed over it, the eyes became fixed and glassy.

"Dead!" cried the doctor. "Did you catch what he said?"

"The name on the stone," replied Breen. "That's what he said just before he fell back."

Warner stepped towards the door, and he and his mate hurried out, leaving the doctor beside the body. In a few minutes they returned, bring with them a small flagstone which they had torn out of the pavement. On the clean, white surface of this stone had been written with a lead pencil:

"Henry Owen,
90 Orchard Street."

The doctor read the words, and then exclaimed:

"The murderer's name!"

But Breen pointed out that the waistcoat had been deliberately opened, and held up a hat which he found near the spot, and showed the same name written on the band. That appeared to disprove the murder theory.

An examination showed that the clothing was new and "ready-made," and that the pockets had not been

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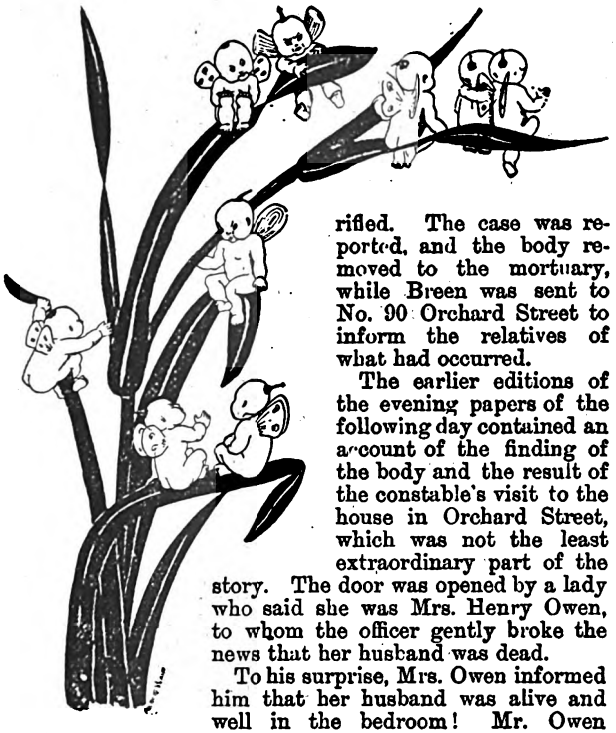

rifled. The case was reported, and the body removed to the mortuary, while Breen was sent to No. 90 Orchard Street to inform the relatives of what had occurred.

The earlier editions of the evening papers of the following day contained an account of the finding of the body and the result of the constable's visit to the house in Orchard Street, which was not the least extraordinary part of the story. The door was opened by a lady who said she was Mrs. Henry Owen, to whom the officer gently broke the news that her husband was dead.

To his surprise, Mrs. Owen informed him that her husband was alive and well in the bedroom! Mr. Owen then came forward and indignantly described it as "another stupid police blunder"; but when he heard of the writing on the stone he was nonplussed. Then Breen showed the name on the band inside the hat—which he had taken with him for purposes of identification—and the constable noticed that Mr. Owen started violently. Finally, when Breen described the man, Mrs. Owen nearly swooned.

The latest editions contained particulars of further developments. Inquiries showed that Mr. Owen possessed a hat exactly similar to that worn by the dead man, but without the name of the owner, and that it bore the same maker's name. It was proved that he had passed the scene of the occurrence that evening at half-past ten. He had appeared confused by certain questions put to him, and the police had decided to arrest him.

The mystery surrounding the case called for the superior ability of an experienced man, and it was handed to the celebrated Inspector Harrison. The latter knew Breen well. The constable was anxious to become a detective and had given promise of considerable ability; moreover, Breen had on a recent occasion rendered the Inspector a great service; so, for these reasons, Harrison was determined to help the constable, and asked for his assistance in the case.

On the second morning Inspector Harrison and Breen were in the mortuary, as the former wished to view the body and see the position of the wound.

"The writing on the stone could scarcely have been done by the man who lies here, as you say," said Harrison. "It is too regular for a dying man."

"That's what I thought, sir," replied Breen. "And that's why I went to Owen's office and managed to get some specimens of his handwriting. I hope you'll help me if I get censured for exceeding my duty."

"You're all right, Breen. It was a smart move. And the handwriting is strikingly like that on the stone," returned Harrison.

"Any news of the identification of the body?" asked the detective, as he prepared to depart a few minutes later.

"No, so far as I know," replied Breen.

As these words were spoken, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of an old man dressed like a well-to-do farmer. His face indicated intelligence and education, but he had something of that peculiar hesitating manner which marks the man unaccustomed to the turmoil of a great city.

"What do you want?" asked Breen, stepping up to the visitor, who was walking towards the place where the body lay.

"Why, as I was going by," said the old countryman timidly, "I thought I'd step in and look at the body."

"What for?" asked the officer. "Do you think you'll recognise it?"

"Recognise it! Well, I should say so. Why, I'm the poor fellow's uncle!"

"Whose uncle?"

"Why, Henry Owen's uncle."

"Henry Owen isn't dead."

"Not dead?" echoed the old man as with trembling hands he drew a copy of a newspaper out of his pocket. "Why, this paper says that he was murdered and that his body was brought here."

"That newspaper has made a blunder," said Harrison, stepping forward. "It was at first thought that the body was Mr. Owen's, but he is alive and well."

"Thank heaven!" said the old man fervently. "Gentlemen, you can't imagine what I've suffered coming here. I've thought over and over again of what his wife must feel, and what I should do to comfort her. And to think it was all what you might call a hoax, and Henry wasn't dead after all! But who is the poor fellow?"

"We do not know," said Harrison, leading the old man to the rude coffin in which the body lay.

At the first glance at the face the farmer started in surprise.

"Well, I don't so much blame them after all," he said. "He certainly looks like Henry."

This statement was a surprise to Breen, who had seen Henry Owen, and had not remarked any striking resemblance between him and the dead man. Yet it now seemed to him that there was some grounds for the farmer's remark.

"Yes, he is very much like Henry," continued the stranger, "but older."

"Do you know Henry Owen intimately?" asked Breen.

"Why, if you come to that, I ain't seen him for ten years," replied the stranger. "But when he was a boy, and even after he grew up, I used to see him every day. Yes, I was very fond of Henry, and of Horace, too."

"Who was Horace?" asked Harrison.

"Henry's elder brother. He's been dead a dozen years or more. He was a wild boy, and ran away from home. That was in '77 or '78 if I remember right."

"Horace ran away?"

"Yes, I'm afraid he was rather the black sheep of the family. But Henry was steady enough—as steady as most boys. That's why he got his father's money, when brother John died. John was a rich man, and his money has been well taken care of by Henry."

"And you say it's ten years since you've seen Henry?"

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"Yes, quite that."

There was a moment of silence, during which Harrison, who was observing the old man closely, saw him give a sudden start as the bright eyes behind the steel framed glasses rested upon some objects on the table near by. Among them was the old-fashioned gold watch that had been found in the dead man's pocket.

"It appears to me that I've seen that watch before," said Mr. Owen.

He stepped forward and took up the watch.

"It can't be possible, and yet it is, it must be," he murmured. "Gentlemen, this is the body of Horace Owen. I've been trying to fight against that conclusion ever since I saw it, but now I'm convinced."

"I thought you said Horace died long ago," said the Inspector.

"We thought he had been lost at sea," replied the old man. "Yet drowned people come back in fact as well as in the story books. This must be Horace, for here's the watch that I gave him when he was a boy."

"How do you know it? There must be a good many watches like it in the world."

"Very likely," responded Mr. Owen, "but I'm sure of this one. Let me show you what an old man's memory can do. It was twenty odd years ago that I gave the boy that watch, yet I'll tell you the number."

Breen took the watch and opened it in a twinkling. Then, turning to Mr. Owen, he said questioningly:

"Well?"

"Shall I give it to you forwards or backwards?" asked the old man with a smile.

"That settles it," said Breen, and he handed the watch to Keith, who saw at a glance what Mr. Owen and the officer meant.

The number was 2,3 2. Owen gave it just as the inspector looked up.

"This is a strong point in the identification," said the detective, "yet it does not go far towards solving the real puzzle. How do you account for the name on the stone?"

"Horace, after he was stabbed, wrote his brother's name and address," said the farmer. "That's natural enough. He wanted his body taken there."

"That might do but for one curious fact," said Harrison. "The writing is not Horace's, but Henry's, and it was done before the stabbing—not after."

"If what you say is true," said the old man slowly, "I don't understand it at all."

"Had the brothers ever quarrelled?" asked the inspector.

"Only about Florence," was the reply. "They both wanted to marry her, and we thought she'd take Horace, though he was so wild. But she took Henry, and there it ended."

"Without bitter feeling?"

"Without an open quarrel," said the old man impressively. "Heaven only knows what a man may feel when the woman he loves is married, and he is not the bridegroom. Yet that was years ago, and it certainly cannot account for the murder of the disappointed man by the successful one."

The old man further said that Horace cut his chest accidentally with a knife when a boy, and, no doubt the scar was still visible; but an examination of the body yielded no result.

Some hours after the scene in the mortuary, Harrison called upon Mrs. Henry Owen.

"I am engaged in the investigation of the death of the man whose body was found in York Alley the night before last," said he, "and I thought that you would be anxious to know what progress has been made."

"Indeed I am," replied the lady. "My husband's uncle has told me of the identification. I cannot credit it; and even if it is correct, not one-hundredth part of the mystery is explained."

"It seemed so to me at first," said the detective, "but on further consideration I decided that the identification carried with it almost the full story of the affair."

"You do not suspect my husband?" she said anxiously, but in a firm voice.

"I am sorry to be obliged to tell you," he said, "that I believe your husband struck the fatal blow."

"You are mad to think so," she exclaimed, growing paler.

"Let us consider the evidence," the Inspector rejoined. "I am glad to find you so calm."

"The evidence in the case," he continued, "takes us back fifteen years. At that time you were loved by two brothers. One of them was a wild and reckless fellow, the other prudent and thrifty. You made the choice that wisdom dictated; that is, if love could go where worldly judgment pointed the way.

"You were married, and for five years you lived in Southampton. Then you moved here and have dwelt in this house ever since.

"I learn from the man—now very old—of whom you at first rented, and later bought this house, that all the negotiations were conducted by you."

Mrs. Owen started to her feet.

"What do you mean by this?" she exclaimed.

"I see that I may omit a large part of the history," said the detective calmly. "You already see its bearing. Let us come at once to the evidence of your husband's uncle. He tells me that though he has been here often, he has never met your husband in this house."

"Well, what of that? It happened so."

"I cannot find that anyone who knew Henry Owen in Southampton ever saw him here. When you moved you severed all old connections.

"You made new friends here. You led a new life. With whom?"

The woman covered her face with her hands.

"Mrs. Owen," the inspector continued, "when I learnt that your husband's only relative had not seen him for ten years; when I discovered that ten years ago he apparently began a new business career; when, finally, I looked for that old scar on the breast of the dead man, and did not find it, then I concluded that here was a strange love story to unravel."

"Speak out," she cried.

"I decided to look for that scar on the breast of a living man," said Harrison. "That the two men who figured in this case were Henry and Horace Owen I could not doubt. But I decided that Henry lay dead in his coffin, and that Horace was alive and in prison.

"I, therefore, sought the prisoner. I asked him, in the interests of justice, to permit me to see his breast. He refused, of course. You should have seen how his hand clutched his coat above that scar."

"Stop!" cried the woman. "You have said that my husband's hand struck the blow which killed that unhappy man. When you said that whom did you mean?"

"I meant your lawful husband," said Harrison. "This was no murder. The condition of the clothing is strong evidence; but stronger than that, in fact conclusive, is the surgical examination of the wound. The man

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could have sought help; he could have made an outcry. Had murder been done by means of such a wound alone, the whole neighbourhood would have been alarmed.

"No; Henry Owen's own hand inflicted the wound upon his breast. I can guess the cause. I have learnt that he arrived here on the day before yesterday in a sailing vessel from Calcutta. Doubtless he has been absent ten years.

"Something parted you. He strayed a long time, and then came back to renew the old life. He learnt your secret, and then he struck that blow.

"But first he wrote those words upon the stone. But for them he might have been buried in an unmarked grave, and your sin might not have been punished in this world. Perhaps that thought came to him at the very last. At any rate his purpose is accomplished.

"This, I am sure, is an accurate outline of the story, sufficient, perhaps, for my purpose. But there are details which you can supply, and I need not tell you that further concealment is useless."

Mrs. Owen crossed the room and leant against the window, pressing her forehead to the cool glass. When she turned, her face showed Harrison what he wished to see—that the struggle was over.

She sat down, and motioned the detective to a seat before her. Then she told her story:

"I have always loved Horace," she said. "I married his brother because he was to be his father's heir.

"Naturally, we did not live happily. It was my fault. My husband grew morose. He gave up his business; he shunned all his friends until they almost forgot him.

"Our unhappiness was known in a general way to our neighbours in Southampton. I was anxious to get away. I persuaded my husband to let me take a lease of this house. He consented, but took no interest in what was to be—as I thought—his new home. In fact, he never came to see it.

"Just before we were ready to come here, we had a quarrel, more violent than any that had preceded. He left me, declaring that he would end a life which I had made unbearable.

"Days passed, and he did not return. I kept my own counsel. My neighbours knew nothing of what had occurred.

"One day I read in a newspaper that a drowned body had been found in the Mersey and had been taken to the mortuary in Liverpool. I went there, for a picture in a newspaper resembled Henry.

"The face of the dead man was greatly distorted, but I thought it was my husband's. The resemblance was certainly remarkable. The clothes were not his. They were rougher than any I had ever seen him wear. I fancied them a disguise.

"I happened to raise my eyes. A man was approaching the slab. It was Horace Owen. I had thought him dead, but he had been living in Liverpool, and had read the account of the finding of the body, and had seen the newspaper picture which had been so like my husband.

"I made a secret sign to him to be silent. He, too, believed the body to be Henry's, but he held his peace at my command.

"We left the mortuary separately, but met not far away. There I unfolded to him the plan which had leapt into my mind the instant that I saw his face.

"It involved both love and money. If Henry's death became known, I should, by the terms of his uncle's will, have only a small portion of his estate. If Horace personated Henry, we could keep all.

"It was easily done. We came to this new house, and all went well. The body that had been found in the river was buried in a pauper's grave.

"I had no suspicion that my husband was alive until he appeared at this house the day before yesterday. You can imagine how dreadful was our meeting. Yet he was generous. He said that he would go away and never trouble me. But his resolution failed, and a desire both to end his wretched life and to be revenged conquered him.

"Try to think what I have suffered since that night!"

Harrison was doubtful for a moment as to what course he should pursue. The woman's agony moved his pity, yet there was no real choice. The story must be told; for there was a fortune to be distributed to the rightful persons, to say nothing of the moral aspects of the case.

The detective secured the release of Horace Owen, and the couple vanished from those parts.

Their remarkable story did, indeed, involve some strange coincidences. The similarity of penmanship discovered by Breen, was, however, not to be included among the doings of chance, for naturally it had been Horace's first task to acquire his brother's style of handwriting.

The matter of the two hats was more in the line of chance, yet the firms of the clothiers and hatters were among the best known in the city; their advertisements were in every paper; and it was not wonderful that a man just home from a far country should buy new attire. He must have written his name in the hat as the result of an old habit. It will be remembered that at that time he had no premonition of the fate that awaited him.

J. Johnson.

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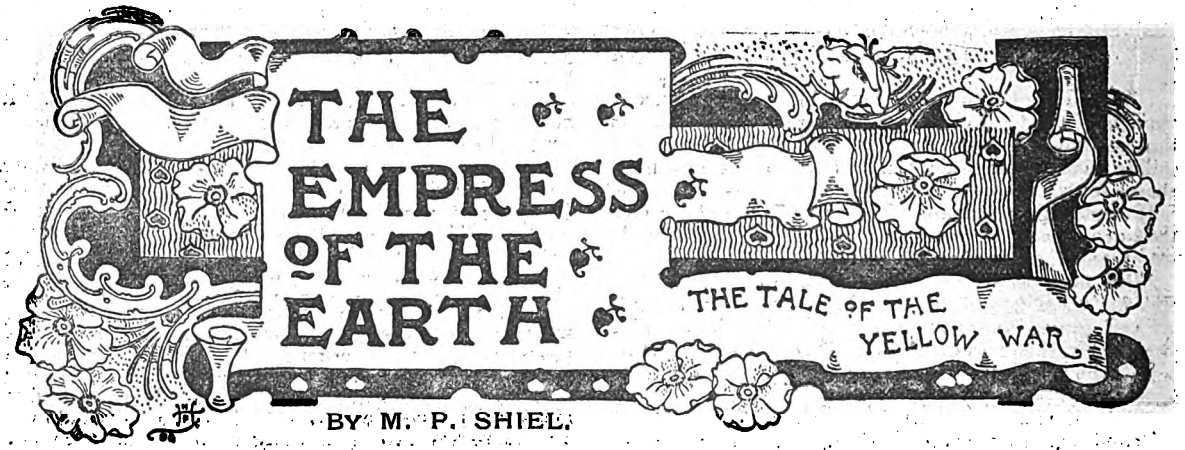

BY M. P. SHIEL.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE YELLOW TERROR.

THE 500 "Chinese", who had come to Petersburg "seeming poor," and who were to be "sent back to their own country," were not Chinese at all, but Japanese; and before they could be "sent back" they had mysteriously scattered, and disappeared in the general mass of Europeans. They were intended to report to Yen How when the moment had come for him, personally, to move forward towards Europe.

The Jehu of that wild four-horse chariot still sat far back in his seat, the reins taut in his hands. The four-fold van of his army was upon Europe, while its rear was still upon Pekin. It stretched across the world.

Between those two mighty masses of mountains which, like the ramparts of the New Jerusalem, have locked in the Celestial Empire from contact, or knowledge, or suspicion, of the vague world beyond, they came. The Dead-Sea-lake after old ages, was a-move, a-flow. Through that mysterious land, which the race-venom of the Mongol race has made a third unknown Pole in the midst of the earth, crawled the weird procession, the unbounded caravan. The wild elephant, and the mild-eyed zebu saw them with wonder, and the summer monsoon went gadding with the marvellous tidings toward the plain, and over the sea to Africa, gossiping that there above, on the high flat land, was a New Thing moving under the sun. The sources of the Me-Kong, the Saluen, and the Irrawady, which only the eye of the couchant tigress, and of the yellow man, have seen, beheld their week-long passage, and heard the creak of the cart, and the cry of the camel, and the muling of a child at the breast.

They heard also the sudden scream with which the Chinese laughed.

Never was so sloven and pell-mell an army; never so straggling, and lumbering, and clumsy an array; but never a power more eager, and more certain, to reach its goal.

The Friant Division of the French Army, going from Presburgh to Austerlitz, once marched forty-five miles a day for two consecutive days. But never a day which did not see this far-spread host seventeen leagues further towards its aim. They could not be called infantry, though millions, during great part of the way, went on foot; for the armoured carts which Yen How had provisioned, the presence of which spread out the host from continent to continent, were the chief means of locomotion, and continually changed their occupants. There was, moreover, no care for life; if a man was ill, if he dropped out of the march like a bird from the flight, he was left to perish, or to return.

The length of all the units of a single army corps in column of route was so unlike anything with which we are familiar, that the figures are incapable of conveying any real idea of its vastness. If the corps could have marched on a single road, its length would have been 1,200 miles, that is to say, the length of three Englands; and the entire corps would have taken eleven days to pass a given point.

This inconceivable worm of humanity contained among its two millions of individuals women incapable of walking a thousand yards, children born since the march began, old men, boys and girls of ten.

Each of these pilgrimaging masses of men was in itself a nation, such as those of which Cæsar writes, only probably far vaster. Its members came, nearly all, from the same province, spoke the same dialect, had been impelled forward by the same set of influences, and been drilled by the same captains. Only its officers were, in the main, Japanese; and into the rank and file of each corps had also been drafted a hundred thousand Japanese, all men.

At the time when the five hundred scattered at Petersburgh, and Yen How, immediately afterwards, received from them through Vladivostok and Nagasaki the news that all Europe was ready to receive him—there were already of these nomad nations a hundred-and-forty on the march.

Some of these hosts (particularly those that passed by the depression of the Jungarie Mountains, along the source of the Irtush, where the central plateau of Asia finds its western gate) had need to traverse tracts of desert country, bare of flocks and cattle, bare even of forage for mule and camel. No widespread difficulty, however, as to food and forage was felt even by these. Whole districts of China had been left bare, as though eaten up by human locusts, by the successive corps which, as it were, bore the country away with them.

Already, on the march, the soldiers of Yen How—men who had lived upon skeleton scarcity from birth, at the rate of some fraction of a penny per week—began to taste the luxuries of life. Not merely dried vegetables, rice, salt, and tea he saw squandered round him, but sausages, preserved meats, fresh meats. The administrative convoys and regimental trains, intended for the distribution of supplies to the troops, covered many a mile; the administrative convoys being in four echelons, two half a day's march in the rear of the regimental trains, and the other two intended to bring up possible additional supplies from the rear. Auxiliary convoys, also in four echelons, and containing many hundreds of vehicles, took up deposits of rice, biscuits and hay, made long before the commencement of operations, at cantonments which extended to the furthest bounds of Chinese and Thibetan territory. They also carried supplies of preserved meats and forage, and followed the army corps at a distance of two days' march.

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Each individual of an army corps, besides, was compelled to carry seven pounds of food in some utensil corresponding to a mess-tin or haversack; this to form a reserve not to be touched, except when every other means of supply failed.

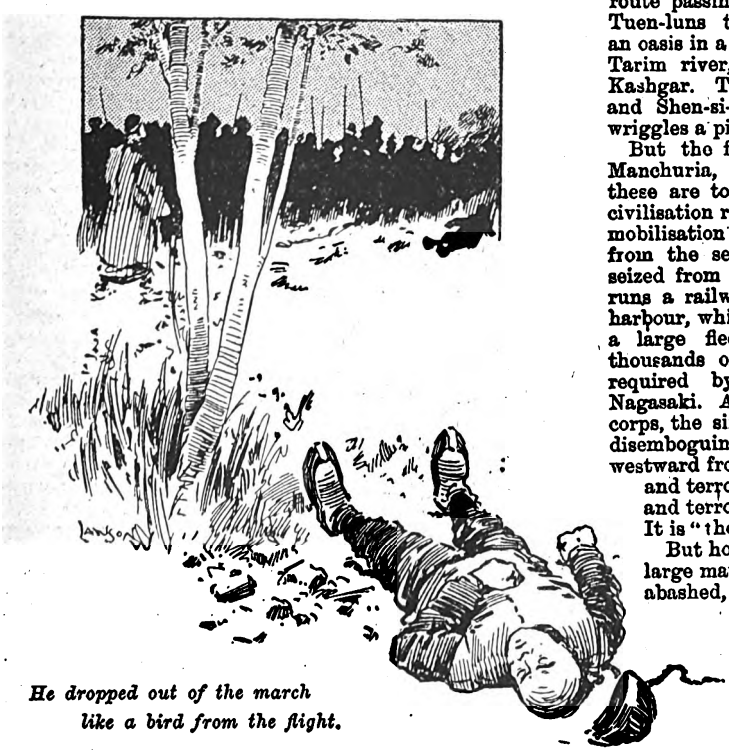
During the process of mobilisation, each division of infantry, and each army corps headquarters, had already vast collections of requisitioned herds of animals, from dogs to camels, sufficient for two days' meat, but intended, by the help of other provisions, to last for weeks. On the march, the cattle marched between the advanced column and the main body of the column.

It was singular with what smoothness the immeasurable machine slid into motion; there was no confusion; western army corps marched first, and then the next in order took up the minuet of nomadism, converging and diverging in rhythmic involution and evolution, like the harmonious currents of a stream, as China began to flow in earnest. In the week, on the day, at the hour that Yen How designed, they moved, they passed away.

Through all that breadth of Thibet between the Himalayas and the Kuen-luns, on a level equal to the height of Mount Blanc, they came pouring and blundering ponderously, fifty army corps of them, some almost abreast, separated only by short intervals of twenty or thirty miles, a hundred millions of them, and behind each man a pigtail wriggling in haste.

Toward what do they press? What vague blessedness? They do not know. They do not ask. When the Pied Piper played his tune, all the rats of all the cities went gaily in haste after him, entranced; they, too, with wriggling tail, and whiskers cocked, and vaguest prospect. Yen How is the Piper of these prone, purblind, forward-shouldering multitudes of nations—he himself a dancer to Another piping.

Then, again, along the sources of the Irtush they poured, and, one night, all round the inhospitable steppe-like slopes which surround the lower level of Lake Balkash, there camped another fifty army corps, some within sight of others, making by far the largest collection of human beings covering a similar area which the stars had yet seen. And the next morning, and during all that day and the next, army corps after army corps, they moved, they passed away.



He dropped out of the march like a bird from the flight.

The first (Thibetan) fifty are southern and western tribesmen, used to hard industry, short of stature, their skin a clear yellow, almost of lemon. They are from furthest Taiwan, from Fo-kien to Yun-nan, and from Kwang-tung to Ho-nan; and they pass between the sources of the Yang-tse-kiang and the Mekong, and between the Hwang-ho and the source of the Kia-ling, climbing to the flat roof of the world through colossal forests bordering on eternal snows, where glaciers and masses of angry water tear and pierce the mountains, forming natural routes through the impassable. By the time they reach the high tableland of many rains and rushing rivers and abounding lakes, they find silent villages and deserted groves of the mulberry. The Thibetans have already passed away. And on through the stripped and empty land they go, shouldering and trundling—a hundred millions—and behind each man wriggles a pigtail in haste.

Then, by the caravan-route which passes from Pekin through the Gobi desert north of the Southern Altais, pass the second (Balkash) fifty. They are Kobdoans, North-western Mongolians (so-called), and tribesmen of the Chinese provinces north of the Hwang-ho (except those of Kan-see, Shen-si, and Pechili); men of a duskier yellow, as of weak-tea-and-milk, tall, and nomads already by instinct and habit, not averse to a further house-flitting—in plenty of company! And these pass the sources of the Irtish to Balkash, and thence go swarming down into the lowlands and desert places round the Aral Sea, where Russia had so sweated and striven in vain. Across the Caspian they will follow, at the right hour, the pioneering (Thibetan) fifty.

Then there are ten corps (the smallest of the four great branches), which, one by one, take the caravan-route passing from Pekin north of the bleak and bare Tuen-luns through all that rich agricultural region—an oasis in a land of barrenness—which is traversed by the Tarim river, beginning at Lob Nov, and ending beyond Kashgar. They are from the teeming provinces of Kan-su and Shen-si—twenty millions—and behind each man wriggles a pigtail in haste.

But the fourth main branch—Pe-chi-li, Korea, Kirim, Manchuria, Eastern Mongolia—tarry long behind; for these are to travel swiftly, and in luxury—in Western-civilisation railway-trains! Not till the last moment before mobilisation is the Russian garrison at Vladivostok shelled from the sea by Japanese ships, and Vladivostok itself seized from land by Chinese soldiers. From Vladivostok runs a railway to Petersburgh; and outside Vladivostok harbour, while the shelling of the forts is proceeding, waits a large fleet of merchant-ships crowded with many thousands of large-grade railway-carriages, such as are required by the Russian lines, manufactured all at Nagasaki. And so to Vladivostok come the thirty Western corps, the sixty millions, the fourth great torrent of that disemboguing Nile. And as the crowded train moves out westward from the station, a shocking shrill scream of glee and terror from two thousand throats—the shrill glee and terror of a child in its first swing—fills all the air. It is "the Chinese scream."

But how great a general is the little doctor! This large matter of his, which would have bewildered, and abashed, and appalled the genius of Cæsar or Napoleon, is all clearly perceived and calculated in his intellect of ice. When he thinks of the world-magnitude of it all, he says "Poh!" To God the world is a grain of dust; to Yen How it is a geographical globe: he metes it with a compass; in a moment he walks about it. With what ease and thoroughness has

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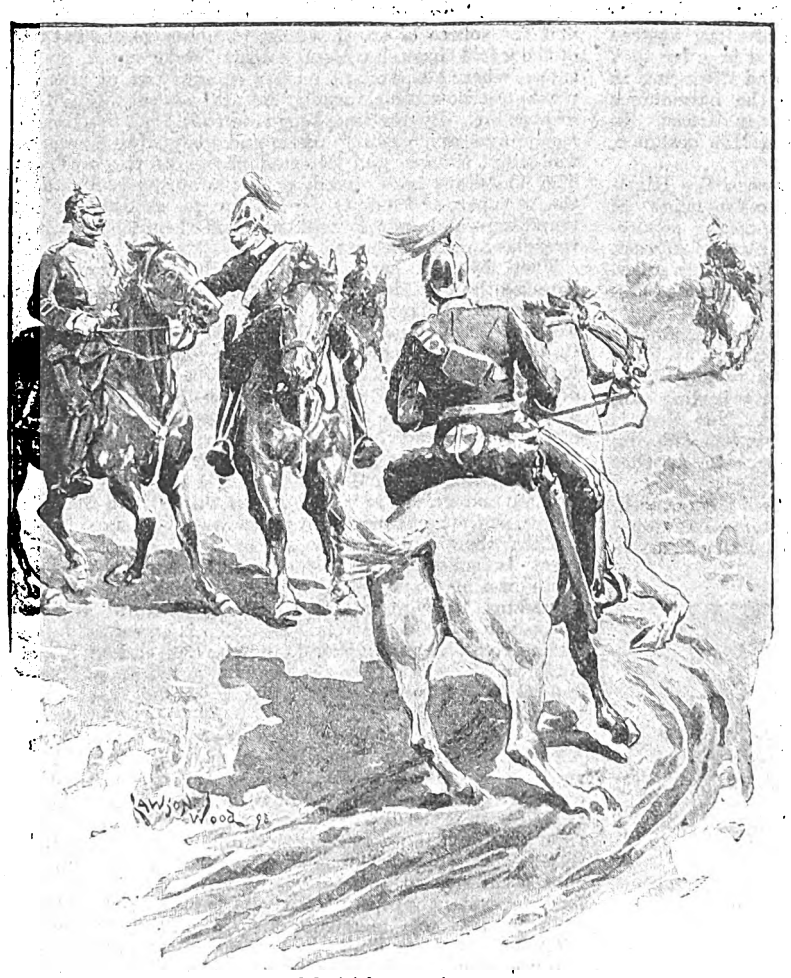
his first thought—that thought which could have occurred only to genius—been realised! By a few scratches of his pen, Europe had been prepared to receive him. "*There will be no more Maxims there,*" he had said to Count Ito with screwed-up eyes; and there *are* no more Maxims there, or none worth mentioning. To lead one's troops "along the line of least resistance"—that being the first maxim of the general, how great a general is Yen in first of all creating a line of no resistance along which to lead!

But to guide that restive, rearing four-horse chariot even over the levelest plain, how iron-strong must be the wrist of its Jehu, and how sublime his gallant callousness!



Surprised by a troop of British mounted vedettes and taken prisoner.

This was his general plan: to connect himself telegraphically with his armies, and personally to direct their actions even in the minutest particulars. For the peculiarity of these monstrous hosts was this: that by means of their unimaginable numbers they could, almost without effort, carry out works in a day which no other army could dream of ever accomplishing at all. Thus, the fifty Thibetan corps crossed the Caspian from Krasnovodsk to Baku, with its carts, transport, and stores, on huge towed rafts constructed *within two days* from materials which they carried with them. So also, wherever the first three great branches passed, they were followed by as many lines of telegraph as there were corps, just as a spider is followed by the thread it spins. And in the centre of this web sat Yen How at Pekin.

Such was his general plan. His particular plan was this: that the first line of Europe's defence should be Germany; for with exact foresight he calculated, some months before the battle in the Channel, that, in almost any case, Germany would still have left some of her army corps. Russia he meant to take by surprise; the Balkan Peninsula by surprise; and both, he calculated, would be incapable of serious opposition.

Into Russia he would pour the sixty millions who went screaming along the Vladivostok railway; into the Balkan Peninsula sixteen millions of the first (Thibetan) hundred millions. The remaining eighty-four millions of these were to be German, Swiss, and Austrian. The two other branches, numbering altogether a hundred and twenty millions, were to be divided into thirty French, twenty Italian, ten Norwegian and Swedish; and because Holland and Belgium had not been directly ravaged by the war, and Spain only by the American war, he designed for Spain the large number of thirty millions, and for Holland, Belgium, and Denmark thirty millions.

And at Pekin Yen How might have remained, and directed all this with absolute exactness and success, were it not that, at the back of the man's brain, there lay this singular thought: that none of the women of England must be killed!—till he gave the word. And he knew well that no earthly power save his own strong, present, personal grip could restrain his wild hordes, fresh from the gleeful slaughter of Europe, from washing their hands in the blood of every human female in Britain.

Therefore he took train at Vladivostok.

The difference between him and Hardy was chiefly this: that with the race-instinct, and race-hatred, and race-ambition of the Chinaman was mixed a personal, private motive, stronger even than the race-motive. Hardy, *like the very greatest*, was concerned only for his country and for the world.

It is written in the Book of the Law of the Universe that selfishness shall, sooner or later, be a source of weakness. Whoever denies this has not gone deep.

The difference between Hardy and Yen How was the difference being Wellington and Napoleon. The latter, being more richly endowed, should have been the stronger—and was not.

At the time when Yen How took train, there was no longer any country corresponding to what was meant when one said "Russia."

As soon as the first contingent of the first army corps passed through the Urals north of Mount Iremel, its first care was to destroy all telegraphic communication between the locality and western centres. Up to this moment not even a suspicion of what was coming had occurred to anyone on the Continent, for it was not till the day after the first arrival of Chinese, that the two British forces in France and Germany received homeward orders.

On the very day of their arrival, the final battle had been fought in France near Bar-sur-Seine with a French loss of eighteen thousand; and on the same day, the Emperor

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Wilhelm, rashly advancing with his staff and a small reconnoitring party too near the British lines at Landsberg, was suddenly surprised by a troop of British mounted vedettes, and taken prisoner.

But when, on the next day, Lord Roberts invited General Daubisson to a conference, and Sir Evelyn Wood invited the freely-liberated Kaiser, the announcements by the two British generals of their intention of immediate withdrawal, and of its cause, was received with mere amazed incredulity. The blow of the thunderbolt was stupifying. The Continental leaders did not fall to their knees and beseech the presence and aid of their British invaders; there are tidings too large to find for themselves room in the brain.

But even while the two conferences were proceeding, what was to become known as the "Yellow Terror" was already abroad—and fifty thousand Chinese had settled in fifteen or twenty Ural villages, whose streets were strewn with dead.

And almost as fast as the news could spread westward, the Chinese spread westward also.

It was the strangest army of occupation. As soon as an army corps entered upon Russian territory it scattered and vanished; it split up into divisions, and one division went one way and one another; and divisions split up into brigades, and one brigade went one way and one another; and so the sub-division went on, every regiment, every company, having its town or village allotted to it by long-previous design. By the time the first contingents of the second corps had crossed the Volga at Syzran, there were probably not a thousand Russians left alive anywhere between Perm and Astrakhan.

There was no fighting. Those that could fly or hide, fled or hid. The rest heard "the Chinese scream," and died. For every one that died two screams went to Heaven; the scream of the victim and the scream of his slayer.

Then spread "the Yellow Terror"; at first slowly, then with the wings of the lightning.

In old Saxon times mothers frightened their crying babes with the swiftly whispered words: "The Danes are coming!" So say, or used to say, the history books. But the panic-horror with which Europe in a few days learnt to receive the simple announcement: *"The Chinese are coming!"* had no sort of resemblance, in its unutterable awesomeness, in its supernatural affright, to any previous terror experienced by men.

The Black Death of the middle ages, which nearly altogether emptied Europe, inspired no doubt an equally agic *suggestion*, but it probably failed in something of that staring, pallid, dry-throated *panic* characteristic of the Yellow Terror, chiefly on account of the element of the unknown and wholly novel in the Chinese cataclysm, on account, also, of the *certainty* of his doom which pierced the heart of each European, and on account, thirdly, of certain hints of unutterable horror which accompanied the rumours of the onward sweep of the yellow wave.

The reign of hell on earth which had followed upon some Japanese victories during the Chino-Japanese war was well known in Europe. If China had fared so at the hand of Japan, how would Europe fare at the hand of China led by Japan . . . ?

Lamentation and a voice in Ramah, and a widening, running shriek, swelling into a cry of such volume and intensity as had never yet risen from earth to the throne of Heaven, marked the middle of the month of August in Europe.

Then came to pass, even to the utmost, that vision in the Apocalypse of the poet: "Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth . . . "

Among the millions that rushed westward in plague-striken panic and frenzied selfishness was the famous duellist Edrapol, who happened to be then at Crackow.

He made straight for Paris; and on arriving at the hotel in the avenue Wagram where he always stayed, he found awaiting him this letter:

SIR,—As I promised you, I am writing to seek you out for the purpose of the little duel to which you challenged me, the European war being now at an end. I confess to you that this duel of yours and mine seems to me a very absurd thing; but still, a bargain is a bargain. I am in a low state of health at present, and quite unable to come to you, even if I knew where you are to be found. But I write instead, so as to be able to say I did not altogether break my word, and am getting the letter to you at considerable personal trouble. I hope you will receive it, and send me, when you can, a reply.

I am, sir,
Your servant,
JOHN HARDY.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WEAK POINT.

DURING the first part of that memorable Week of accountable, yet strange Night, when the darkened sun and the quaking crust of the earth seemed to the affrighted imagination of men surely to portend the coming of the great and dreadful day of the wrath of God, John Hardy's agents were hot on the trail of the young woman whom he sought.

The scream of the victim and the scream of his slayer.

Three weeks previous to the week of darkness, the old butler had brought him a list of the men left in hospital of the Duke of Cambridge's Own regiment, and as Hardy's eye ran down the list, he saw a name which he had heard, which was on the tip of his memory, yet which he had been unable to remember. His eye lit up at the sight of it. It was the name of the soldier John Brabant.

There was nothing miraculous in the fact that Brabant still lived; yet to Hardy it seemed nothing less than a genuine miracle. Faith in the Divine formed the groundwork and rock-bed of his simple nature; and his eye continually searched for, and assumed the stealthy, busy Finger.

A day after receiving the list he was able to leave his bed, and at once he hurried, muffled up in wrappers in a close carriage, to the Chelsea Hospital, and the bed-side of Brabant.

Brabant, as it happened, was slowly dying from exhaustion as the result of an amputation, and did, in fact, die a few days later. He was, however, in his senses, and able to give to Hardy the address of the villa at which the girl Seward had been, or was still (for he was not sure), a servant.

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To Hardy, the one thing of paramount interest in the world seemed to be to have this girl, whose initials he bore branded on his breast, secure in his own keeping. He had the instinct to lock her away in some Castle of absolute safety, and feed her every hour with his own hands, lest chance or change should befall her.

That, at a time when the earth was travailing in death-throes and birth-throes, all should depend, one way or the other, upon a London servant-girl, was not, in reality, unlike the way of Life. Things happen—not "with vigour and rigour," as Mr. Matthew Arnold very well says, but in that fast-and-loose fashion. When Fate is not freakish, she is unlike herself. The unprecedented is the natural, and may be counted upon. Destiny is full of novelties.

That a nerve in this particular girl should set a nerve in Yen How a-tingling, and that Yen How's tingling, spreading out beyond all limit into transcendental rapture, should infect a whole planet with tingling,—this was nothing more than the launching of a battle-ship by the pressure of an electric button, or the loosening of an avalanche by the rolling of a pebble. In such surprises both Fate and Nature abound.

But Ada Seward was no longer at the Pattison villa; all the information which could be gathered there was the fact that she had a brother, a bicycle-smith, residing in Church Road, Chelsea, to whom she may have gone after suddenly leaving the Pattisons. But the brother declared that she was not there; and either he could not, or would not, give any further details about Ada to the agents employed by Hardy.

It became clear that about the girl and her movements hung some sort of mystery; that something was being concealed with regard to her.

Hardy commenced to seek her throughout England, advertising in every paper, and setting to work the best detectives.

If she were abroad? If she were dead? And if Yen How knew it—had secret means of knowing it? In that case Hardy had no hope.

He remained in a state of brooding, morbid pensiveness. At night he sat long at table after dinner, drinking much too freely, his right hand on the mouth of the decanter, his left hanging heavy, his head sunk. In this way three weeks passed; and still the girl remained hidden.

Then came the memorable Week of Darkness.

At this time the wild flood of migration from the Continent was in full sweep. England had risen nobly to Hardy's summons to offer herself as the City of Refuge to the ill-fated peoples of Europe, and had opened to them her large and pitying bosom, as a mother folds her terrified child.

The merchant marines of all the still unswamped nations, with the whole available merchant marine of Britain, were engaged in the continual task of deportation.

But like "the pious pelican" which feeds her young with the blood of her own torn breast, England fed the stranger with her own life.

The famine grew sore in the land, even though the self-governing colonies, at the first warning of the facts, set stoutly to work to meet the demands upon their feeding powers.

In Britain itself, quite suddenly, there sprang into being the visible germs of a real Socialism. The necessities of the human race no longer admitted of quibbling and compromise with the root facts of life and the root laws of God. It had been the custom before the war to say, in a phrase so generally accepted that it had passed into an axiom, that England "*could not feed herself.*" The wild fancifulness of this assertion (which might bring a smile to the lips of even a child who seriously thinks of it) may be seen from the arithmetical fact that England (or any other ordinary piece of land of similar size) can feed, not only herself, but almost the entire population of the globe—under right and natural conditions of life. For if a man, or a child, unhampered by artificial customs, will set to work with a spade and a hoe upon the ground, it is a fact that a very small piece of fertile land—something like the tenth of an acre—will supply him not only with food to keep him continually munching, but with so much more than he can eat himself, that he shall have enough left over to give in exchange to someone else who has spent his time in making boots and clothes, and wishes to sell these in exchange for the surplus corn or carrots grown by the first man. Now, on the broad bosom of Britain, which is not niggardly, but rich in alimentary bounty, there are 790,000,000 of such pieces of land; and 790,000,000 is much the larger portion of the population of the earth.

England, therefore, if she be properly governed, can quite surely feed not only herself, but the rest of mankind as well.

This had been the "open secret" of social life, preached through many a century by the single-eyed great ones—with their simple and discerning wit! But it needed nothing less than the inexorable compulsion of Destiny to teach it clearly, once and for all, to the whole race.

Meantime, in the absence of regulations, which involve time for their accomplishment, the rich men and the not-poor men of Britain came nobly forward with proffered purse to the perishing millions.

But from the West, from across the Atlantic, there came to Britain a shock almost as horrifying as the vague rumours of the reign of Terror then going forward eastward on the Continent.

America, crowded with ten thousand Christian churches, refused to receive the fugitives from Europe.

This shocking inhumanity had for its excuse an objection to be swamped by "a pauper immigration."

England, now the one great Mother of the world, pondered this thing in her heart—and never forgave it.

John Hardy's proposal of a League between Britain and the United States had ended in a fiasco. An attempt had at once been made by the British Government to carry the proposal into effect. America had accepted the idea; but as soon as it came to a question of detail, of the making of sacrifices, Mammon, "the least erect" of all the spirits, drew back into selfish aloofness.

Meanwhile, the only possible defensive measure against the Yellow Wave on the part of England was an intense activity at Chiswick, at Jarrow, at Chatham, at Birkenhead, at Sheerness, at Portsmouth, at Paisley, at Glasgow, at Newcastle, at Pembroke, at Sunderland, in every government, in every private dock ard. Thousands of men were requisitioned from remotely allied trades to aid in the agonised work of building, building, building. But Hardy, for one, smiled at the idea that Yen How was going to be simple enough to allow Britain time to build ships to beat him.

He, for his part, had set going another activity, equally eager, and more to the point.

By direct suggestion to the First Lord of the Admiralty, he had singled out the men of the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers as the nucleus of force which must now become the hope of Britain.

Though there was hardly any longer a Royal Naval body of men, there still remained a Royal Naval Reserve in considerable numbers; when therefore Hardy designated the Artillery Volunteers, Mr. Goschen, who alone was in the secret of his plans, expressed surprise.

Hardy, however, persisted; and the next day, by proclamation, the members of the force were requisitioned for service. At the same time a large additional number of volunteers sent in their names to the commanding officers of the stationary drill-ships.

The members of this force, which had always, since its formation by special Act in 1873, formed one of the most exclusive clubs in the world, consisted only of professional and business men, doctors, bank-clerks, solicitors, stock-

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brokers, authors, who had regularly left the desk, or the consulting-room, or the office, to attend at least twice a month at gun, rifle, pistol and cutlass drill, until they attained the standard of "efficients," men who had cast off the orchided frock coat, completely sinking their social position, to put on the blue working-dress of the simple blue-jacket on the yearly cruises in the gun-boat, or the Saturday-to-Monday cruise in the seamanship-practice schooner. These men, belonging exclusively to the great middle class, represented the very essence of the mood of England. And it was with them alone that Hardy proposed to set up the first, and perhaps the last, dam to the flowing Yellow Wave.

He wanted 4,000 of them; and he got them.

The various drill-ships of the local brigades were assembled at Portsmouth with tenders, and the work of drilling and instruction went forward with unremitting zeal, the 4,000 and odd gentlemen who composed this strange force subjecting themselves to the most grinding discipline, sleeping in hammocks, swabbing decks, cooking food, and cleaning guns; opening, above all, their already trained minds to the art of fighting on moving water.

But when they asked one another *why* they were doing all this, there was no forthcoming answer. There certainly were the men, but where were the ships?

Hardy, in his jealousy lest his ships might be used for purposes at all other than those for which he purposed them, had kept his secret well. They were to him like buried gold to the miser. He gloated inwardly over the thought of them, over the loud language he would make them talk when that great hour came.

Meantime, he sat brooding often, sometimes desperately ill, sometimes with his hand resting for hours on the mouth of the decanter, his sunken head crowded with the busy fumes of wine.

He hurried . . . to the bedside of Brabant.

And as he sat so one night—it was the Tuesday of the Week of Darkness—something spurred within him, and he sprang to his feet, and took his cap, and went out into the stifling dark air.

His once gentle heart, though embittered and desperate, was not wholly dead. Under this sudden impulse, wine-inspired, he jumped into a cab and drove to Park Lane.

He stopped at the door of Miss Jay. He had now been several weeks in England, yet had not seen her. Why he now went he did not ask himself: some vague motive worked in him to insult, or press, or smite her in the face,—such was the tragic desperation of his empty and callous heart.

Love, tenderness, were far from him now; yet in the depths of his nature some ungovernable cry in the dark, some fierce yearning perhaps, spurred him toward the sister of his soul: such subterranean throes occur in the dim places of the hearts of men.

Her carriage drove up to the door as he entered it, and he found her in evening dress in the drawing-room, cutting the leaves of a book. War, and eclipse, and the overthrow of the world, seemed to leave untouched the reposeful tenor of this very-modern young lady's life.

Here was the "*morgue britannique*" in its very ultimate demonstration.

"You are well again, then, Mr. Hardy?" she said, giving him her hand, "I am so glad!"

"Well or not, I am come to see you, you see."

He threw his cap one way and himself another, and looked gloomily at her.

She, for her part, was shocked—at his aged eyes, his wild aspect, the quite visible grey in his hair. Now, at least she recognised a man, and a master of men.

For minutes of inward reflection there was silence between them. He said:

"I told you I would come again, and come I am."

Her heart bounded. She answered: "Yes."

"Have you got over all that about Art?" This he asked with a momentary gentle smile.

"No—not got over it"—the irony in her leaping up, and smothering the pity: "not yet. A weakness of that sort clings so to one. In the absence of a sun, one works by lamp-light—which is all that remains."

"Well, I see you are still a mocker. But one cannot always go on mocking."

"No, no. I do not mean, really, to mock at anything. In reality, I am very sorry, and sad, at everything."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, I believe that, too. At bottom you are good and kind."

"I hope so."

"That was why I came to see you now. Heaven only knows why I came. You ought to have married me when I told you."

"Oh, as to *that*—" she said.

"No, no, do not begin that again!" he retorted fretfully. "Can't you guess that I am changed in mood, and everything? All that is not for me any more."

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Somehow her heart sank; and the sadness of autumnal winds sighing among dead leaves smote its chords. So wild a pity is in the world, and so bitter a sob.

She said:

"I can see that you are changed, yes; and I divine that you are far from happy. What has been the matter?"

"Why should I tell *you*?"

"There is no reason in the world, Mr. Hardy."

"You see, that is the way you talk to me!" he said, regarding her fixedly under his eyes: "soon, when I am gone, you will be saying to yourself, 'Well, it was bitter of me not to love and comfort poor John Hardy in his misery.'"

"Gone?" she questioned,—"gone where to?"

"Gone to God"—and in a lower tone—"gone to Hell."

And now she rose, and in haste went to sit beside him. And the pity of ministering angels was in her voice.

A private detective was ushered into his presence.

"Tell me," she said, "for you have come to me feeling that I am your good friend, and you should tell me."

"Ah, it is nothing," he said, and he flung himself backwards on the sofa where he sat.

"It must be very much, since it has affected you so. I heard something . . . . but did not quite realise it. You should—you should have come before."

"Come for what? I tell you it is no good at all any more!"

"But you are too—too despondent. See—you say you want my love and comfort—there is my hand in yours, my friend. If you do not tell me your trouble, that will mean to me that you do not—really—care for me."

"Ah, I did, though! I did!"

"And do—or you would not come. Can't you see that? You do still. So you must open your heart to your friend."

He looked into her eyes, and they swam in tears. His head lying back on the sofa-back rolled from side to side.

"You are a good, kind girl," he said, "and I knew that long ago. I had a kind of power to guess everything that was in you. Why did you not—but it is useless talking now. Let me go away."

"No, no—do not say that."

"Well, now, I call you wondrously good."

"Of course I am—*of course*. Can't you divine? I—*naturally*—do not wish you to go. You look so sad—so worn with suffering. Why is that? How is it? Ah! I am so—I could not tell you. But you—tell *me*, for I beg you, all your trouble."

"Well, well. . . . But to what end?"

"Because *I* ask you: and because I feel that it will do you good to tell me."

She ought to have said "because it will redeem you, and save you to tell me"; for that was the truth.

And, indeed, an impulse did then rise in John Hardy to tell to *her* at least that history which he was hoarding and hugging venomously in his breast, which he had breathed to no living soul, save in one short sentence to old Bobbie Mason; the history of those long tortures—how the scream of a cat had been rent from his twisting and beastialised soul—how he had cursed the deaf ears of Heaven—how, now, his poor nerves, tingling in a chaos of jangling dissonance, like the wires of some shattered instrument of music, represented all the universe to him as a mere black nightmare crowded with sighing winds and unutterable, dismal shapes of woe—how, above all, his passion for vengeance had settled within him into the cruel and wicked malice of a fiend.

He had the impulse to tell it all out, and save his soul. And he said:

"Well—I will tell you—if your ears can bear it. You know, do you not, that I went to China—but no, no, no! I am not a child, Miss Jay! do let me get away—!"

And suddenly, he had snatched his hand from hers, had sprung up, and was gone almost before the cry had leapt from her lips.

And she, for a long time, sat staring vacantly at the floor, and did not go out that evening.

During that (Tuesday) night, the Japanese fleet, just arrived in Europe, appeared in twos and threes along the south-east coast. On Wednesday morning, England heard the news that Hastings, Brighton, Worthing, and so on all along to Bognor, had been reduced to heaps of broken stone, some seven hundred people having been killed.

That was on the Tuesday. On the Wednesday evening Hardy received a small wooden box, bearing the direction: "John Hardy, England." It bore no stamps, and had evidently been brought from its origin "by hand."

On opening it, he found a quantity of paper stuffing; and, this being removed, a dry and shrivelled, but still evil-smelling object, upon which had been stuck a small oblong piece of paper. On the paper were three lines of tiny, neat writing; and the words written were these:

"From Yen How to John Hardy.

"Heart of His Royal Highness Prince Heinrich of Hesse."

Prince Heinrich of Hesse, as Hardy knew, was a young child of eight.

Even while Hardy sat contemplating this object, a private detective was ushered into his presence. He came to say that, at last, by means of a confession of her brother, he had been able to trace the whereabouts of the girl Seaward.

(To be continued.)

U.S.A. v. SPAIN.

For the first time in the history of British journalism a serial story of a war is running concurrently with the actual fighting.

This story is entitled

"Contraband of War,"

and has just started in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Get a copy at once; you will not regret it. A concise summary will enable you to start right away.

Pearson's Weekly is published every Saturday, and costs one penny.

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GREAT - WAR - COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE . . £5 | **25 Prizes of Handsome Books.**
Five Prizes of £1 each. | **25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.**

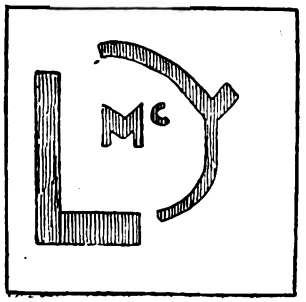
In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

TOO much interest is at the present moment centred in that part of the world round the unfortunate Island of Cuba, that the competition we have inaugurated, and which started last week, should commend itself particularly to readers of *Short Stories*.

Below will be found eight pictures. Each one depicts the name of some place, or ship, or man associated with the combatants. Five sets of these pictures will be published. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep all the sets by you until we ask you to send them in.

The daily newspapers will give you the best help in discovering solutions, as most of the names depicted have already appeared in the press.

PERSON.



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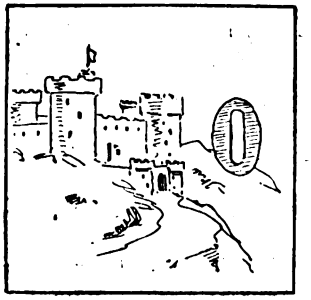
WARSHIP.



No 10.....

PERSON.

No. 11.....

WARSHIP.

No. 12.....

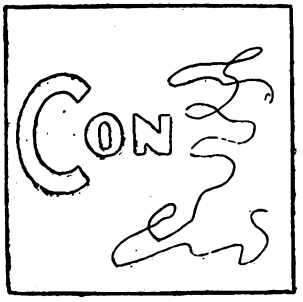
PLACE.

No. 13.....

WARSHIP.

No. 14.....

WARSHIP



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WAR COMPETITION.

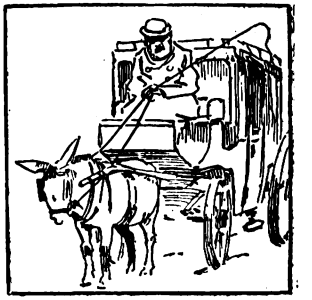
No. 2.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

PLACE.



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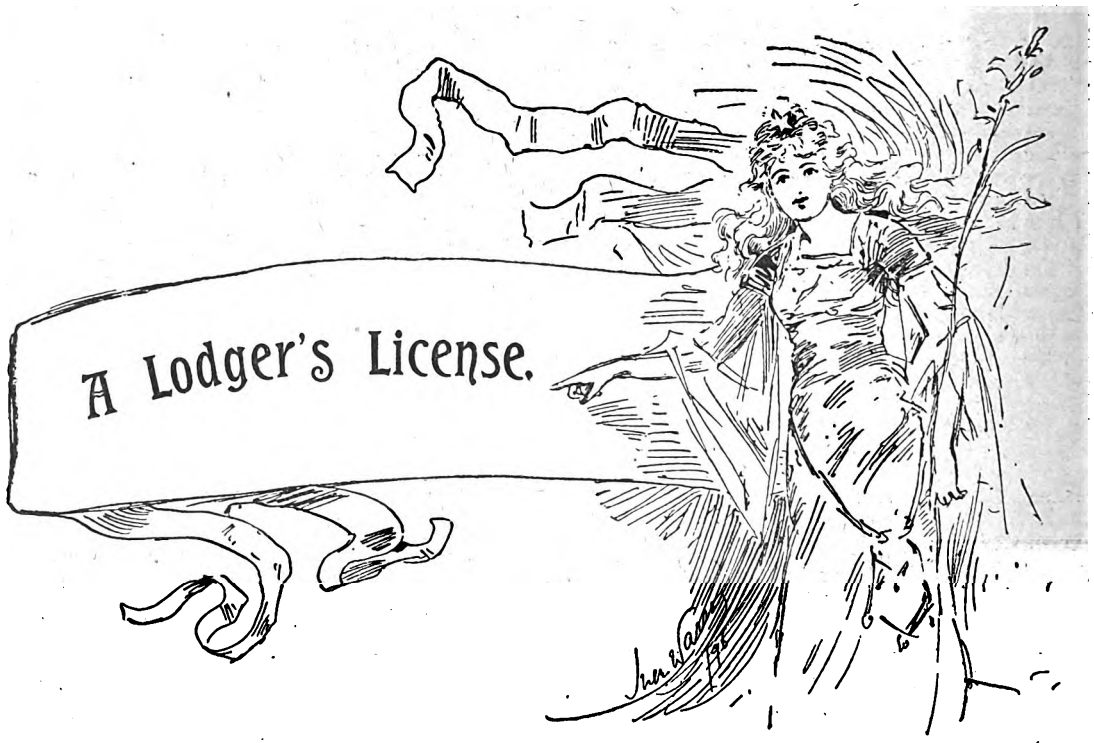

I was disgustingly late. A clock somewhere behind the Museum struck three as I came round the corner of the square. The one wedge of light thrown on the spectre trees was my reproach. It came, undoubtedly, from the third floor window of number thirty-one.

And from the second floor! I noticed this as I reached the steps and laughed softly. So after all I was not the only one. Besides, the other man would have someone waiting up for him. I knew this because he was newly married, had only been married a few weeks.

I felt sorry for the man. I had never seen him, did not even know his name. But to come home at three in the morning and find someone sitting up for you was horrible.

"Poor beggar," I said.

Something made me glance up towards the lighted window on the second floor. The shadow of a woman was thrown distinctly on the blind. It was the shadow, one knew instinctively, of a pretty woman.

Instinctively—yet for my part I was not dependent on instinct. It was possible for me, presumptious, but possible, to fill in the pretty profile with unquestionable precision.

Smoking my pipe at the window I had often watched that tiny figure emerge from the house, enter the square by the rusty iron gate, and pace up and down the prim gravel path waiting for *his* return. Once I had been indiscreet enough to cough in the hope that she might look up. A flirtation from a fourth floor window might have led to anything.

But a fourth floor window is a long way up. The cough miscarried, solicited an old clothes man, brought him to the door, kept him there arguing with the landlady, insisting that I had called him, wanted to see him, and that he wasn't going away until he had seen me.

By this time I had found the latch.

It was perfectly dark as I closed the door behind me. I never knew before what a long way it was along that hallway, or what a lot of things, perambulators chiefly, I fancy, were used in the furnishing.

I hoped that the other man might not come in until I was safely aloft. In doing so he might bring about a scuffle in the dark before discovering that we had an equal right to the stairs.

The first floor at last! I began to mount circumspectly. I knew nothing of married life, but I thought if she were waiting for him with a water jug.——

In spite of my caution, the door opened as I went by.

"I beg your pardon," I said quickly. "It's——"

The door closed softly but rapidly; I fancied I heard a sigh. I am quite sure I heard one. Perhaps she had had no intention of throwing water-jugs about. Perhaps—I recalled many instances in which a mistake like that had been made in the dark. Pooh!

I made up my mind to get married: began to anathmatise the other man.

"The brute," I said.

I could hear footsteps down below; every now and then the swish of a skirt.

She was pacing up and down, growing anxious. What in the world did the man mean by it—if a man can't come home at decent hours when he is married and to such a pretty woman as——

Certainly she was pretty, and undoubtedly jolly. Girls with crumply hair and blue eyes and big laughing mouths are invariably jolly. Probably wouldn't be hard to entertain. With such a girl as that I could get on famously.

I looked at my watch. It was, in fact, nearly half-past-three, and still that pacing down below continued. It got on my nerves; when a woman gets on my nerves I invariably grow impolite.

"Little fool," I said. "Why doesn't she go to bed?"

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Perhaps she was frightened that something had happened to that reprobate husband of hers. I had half a mind to call to her over the banisters and tell her not to be ridiculous. It was useless for her to sit up.

And if she would sit up—why, she might just as well come and entertain me.

For my own part I had no inclination to go to bed. I lit a cigarette and waited.

I cannot say what put the idea into my head, but it certainly crossed my mind more than once that it was a pity we could not entertain one another until the missing man chose to return. To conform with the proprieties we might sit on the stairs. I pictured her to myself, however, sitting in the arm-chair opposite. I imagined how she would look with the soft glow of the tall lamp falling on her. With my mind filled with this delicious reverie I was, in fact, already carrying on an imaginary conversation with my visitor.

The door down below opened softly.

I rose from my chair, and crossing over to my own door, opened it. She might just as well know that I was not asleep in case—well it was possible that she might be frightened, might be glad to consult with someone; just talking will help to pass away the time.

Yet I confess that surprise made my breath come a little faster when a moment later I heard her foot on the stairs.

She hesitated half way up, then came on resolutely and knocked at the door.

"May I come in?" she asked.

"Please do," I said.

She was perfectly self-possessed seemingly. And yet somehow I fancied that this appearance was due to extreme embarrassment. She bowed formally; hesitated; threw a half glance over her shoulder.

"I am afraid you'll thing it very strange of me coming up in this unceremonious way," she said, and blushed. She began rushing her words; anxious to say something, suddenly her nerve gave way, she stopped, and blushed.

I hastened to put her at her ease.

"I think it is very kind of you," I said. "Your husband is late, but I am sure there is no need for anxiety. If I can do anything for you——"

"That is just—" Her courage seemed to ooze away again. "My husband has not yet come back. It's most extraordinary. He is always in long before this—and I am dreadfully tired."

"He cannot be much longer," I said. Secretly I hoped he would be. It was not at all unpleasant to act as comforter in his absence.

"You will find that chair very comfortable," I said with a little wave of invitation.

"Oh, but I can't stop," she said. "I only came up ——" She came a step nearer and laughed nervously.

"Have you any sisters?" she asked.

"Lots," I answered encouragingly.

"Then—" She looked at me closely. "Grown-up ones?" she asked sharply.

"No—short frocks and pretty governesses," I said.

I suppose she thought this flippant; her face fell dismally, and she took a pace back. And then the devil got into me.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I would have grown-up ones if I could. I would do anything if I thought it would please you. I—pretty governesses are just the same experience as grown-up sisters," I said.

"You don't understand," she said.

"Then teach me to understand."

She stood with her head a little on one side tantalisingly. "It's so ridiculous," she said.

"Seems ridiculous," I admitted, "but in reality—dead earnest."

"Yes," she said.

I went a little nearer. Events were hurrying.

"You don't think it very strange of me," she said. "You understand?"

"Perfectly—of course," I said. "Under the same circumstances."

"So you appreciate the circumstances——?"

"Perfectly," said I.

I went a little nearer, and as I did so she turned away.

I took her hands into mine from behind. She snatched them away violently—furiously. My lips just touched her hair.

"How dare you!" she cried. Her face flamed, a taut look came into her eyes.

I heard the front door open and shut again.

With a little cry she darted across the room.

That door opening and closing again appeared to have an extraordinary effect upon her. All her composure returned. At the door she even waited to throw me a little mocking courtesy.

"Look here," I said hurriedly.

"Well?"

She stood with one hand on the door handle listening to me and to the footsteps on the stairs.

"You are not angry with me? You——"

"Misunderstood me," she said.

The look in her blue eyes emboldened me.

"Well, what did you want?" I said defiantly.

The footsteps were coming every moment nearer.

"I wanted my bodice unlaced behind, of course," she said, and flaunted out of the room.

I was never more surprised in my life.

MERRIDEN HOWARD.

A Novel Competition.

THE proprietors of Nixey's Black Lead and Cervus Flannelette Bag Blue, offer £5 in prizes for competition on the following conditions:

Eight prizes: £2, £1, two of 10s., and four of 5s., for the best poem or experiences in the use of Nixey's Black Lead and Blue.

There is no entry fee, but each competitor must enclose a wrapper, one of which is supplied with every packet of black lead and bag of blue.

Contributions to be sent in before May 31st, 1898, addressed, Black Lead and Bag Blue Competition, care of W. G. NIXEY, 12 Soho Square, W., and mentioning *Short Stories*.

Why is your Nose in the Middle of your Face?

IF you can correctly answer this all-absorbing question, together with others that are appearing within the next few weeks in *Pearson's Weekly*, you stand a very good chance of scooping in £50, which is the first prize offered in a Big Conundrum Competition. Altogether there will be thirty of such conundrums, and £100 will be divided amongst those who answer them most correctly.

WHY IS YOUR NOSE IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR FACE?

Come now, can't you guess? If not, ask the next friend you meet. Perhaps he or she will be able to help you.

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CHAPTER XXI.

In the Lord Abbot's Cellar.

Travellers who wish to form a correct estimate of the political condition of a country without the trouble of reading the newspapers and making the deductions necessary after such reading, would do well to observe the noses of the statues adorning the public buildings and squares. If the noses are in good condition, then the ship of state is sailing in calm water; but if marks of violence and mutilation are to be seen, it may be safely asserted that the land has passed through troublous times.

On the day following the attack on the Abbey St. Martin, there was comparatively little evidence of the horrible scene that had been enacted there. A certain portion of the outlying buildings lay in blackened ruins, it is true; shutters had been torn from several windows, and the costly hangings in the chapel had been dragged down and trampled under foot; but all these were matters that could easily be set right, and things would have looked much the same as ever in a few days, if it had not been for the mournful and grotesque appearance presented by the many figures of saints which adorned every room and corridor. Not a nose had been left to the holy men of old! Some of the statues had been nearly demolished, others had been chipped and scarred, but one and all had been ruthlessly deprived of their most prominent feature!

As soon as the Abbey had been cleared of the marauders, the wounded were cared for and the dead prepared for burial. Many were found to have fallen in the fray, monks had been trampled to death or struck down by the brutal mob, archers and tramps had fallen in deadly conflict, more had been cut down by the royal troops. The body of Tristan de Pamiers was claimed by his student subjects and was honoured by a stately funeral.

Prior Anselm celebrated a solemn mass for the departed, and then all at the Abbey resumed its usual course.

The one department which had suffered irreparable loss, in addition to the stone saints, was the wine cellar. The door had been forced by the thirsty throng early in the proceedings, and the casks of choice wines had been rifled, the contents had been poured like water down the insatiable throats of those who had never tasted the like before, and never would again.

When the underground premises had been cleared of belated revellers, and the remainder of the wine laid down with all due care, a thorough search was set on foot by the Prior, to discover the fate of the Queen. Every nook and corner of the Abbey had been carefully investigated without result, and now the only hope was that she might have fled to the cellars to take refuge in the dark.

They called the name of Ingeburge through all the subterranean vaults and passages, they took torches into every dark recess, but in vain. Not a trace of the Queen could be discovered!

The only small comfort left to Anselm was that her body had not been among the slain, but how did he know that a worse fate had overtaken her? Amongst the archers and more ignorant of the brotherhood, the belief gained credence that the mock invalid who had gained

Prior Anselm sadly turned towards this last resource.

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admittance by fraud, was the enemy of mankind in person, who had carried her off under the disguise of Jean Cador, the carver of images.

There only remained one place where search had not been made, and that was the Lord Abbot's private cellar, which opened out of the last vault. This place contained a special store of the choicest vintage and was only opened when the Abbot paid a visit to his Abbey, as he took care to keep the key himself.

Prior Anselm sadly turned towards this last resource, and tried the door, but it resisted every effort, so he came away in despair, saying:

"No one has gone in there!"

A lay brother shot the bolt across the door and the little band withdrew, feeling sad indeed, for the Queen had endeared herself to all who had come in contact with her during her stay amongst them.

As soon as the sound of their retreating footsteps had died away, under the low roof, a distinct noise, as of stifled laughter came from the Abbot's cellar. Three voices were distinguishable, and it was not the mad mirth of maniacs but the suppressed merriment of men who were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Behind that door were three men, and it was they who had succes-fully baffled the Prior's attempts to open it. When one of them lighted a torch, the well-known features of Ezekiel, Tréfouilloux, and "Poor Louise" were recognisable in the uncertain light.

The last-named, who had been left for dead on the floor of the cell by the soldiers when they carried away the wounded, speedily took advantage of his solitude to make off in the direction of the cellars. Here he fell in with his two rivals, who had no heart for fighting when it involved personal risk. To explain how "Poor Louise" had survived the deadly thrust from Eric's dagger it will be necessary to go back to his quest in the monastery.

When he was exploring the deserted cells, any one who had had time to notice him would have observed that in proportion as his search was prolonged his bodily dimensions increased. Nature had been bountiful to him in the first instance, but this rapid development of corpulence was due solely to art—the art of acquisition. "Poor Louise" participated in the common weakness of the sex he counterfeited, and could not resist the temptation of white, finely-spun linen, so that in each cell he entered, he managed to annex something. A sheet, no matter whether it covered a sick man or a corpse was not to be passed over, shirts, towels, anything he could lay hands on, were quickly stuffed inside his capacious garments.

It was into this ample breast-plate of stolen goods that Eric's dagger entered, and "Poor Louise," who was no fool, saw that the game was up for the present, and that it would be the better part of valour to lie low.

By dint of long and continued efforts, these three doughty warriors had managed to burst open the door of the private cellar, and had taken great pains to secure themselves from all interruption. Their investigation of the contents of their hiding-place gave them unmixed satisfaction, and Tréfouilloux had made a nice calculation that, provided they were undisturbed, they could drink on for the next two years without the supply running short. The only drawback was that they had nothing to eat, but that was a small matter, for they knew that when a man is drunk he wants but little solid food, and they meant to be drunk for months to come!

"Oh, good luck!" said Tréfouilloux, "what a change this is from the gutter outside Nôtre Dame! Mates, this is something like a life!"

"We shall not have the sun scorching our heads," added Ezekiel.

"Nor the cold rain and sleet to freeze the marrow in our bones!" chimed in "Poor Louise."

They struggled to their feet and clinked the huge flagons which were serving them as drinking-cups, before emptying them to their new-found happiness.

Clinked the huge flagons.

There was almost an element of solemnity in their joy Their wildest dreams had never pictured such a scene as this! To have wine from morning till night, only for the trouble of pouring it out! Warmth! Shelter! Drink and Idleness! Truly a veritable beggars' Paradise!

"When they come to fetch wine for the Abbot, we must hide in the empty casks," said Tréfouilloux prudently.

"Ah, that greedy old monk will be drinking half our store! I'd forgotten him," grumbled "Poor Louise."

The other two laughed and proposed all kinds of ways by which they might deprive the holy Father of his costly nectar.

"Bah!" cried Ezekiel in a fit of generosity, "we must all drink!"

"Look here," began Tréfouilloux, after a moment's reflection, "we can tell all sorts of tales of our adventures by sea and land when we go back to Nôtre Dame, now's the time to invent our stories."

"When we go back——" began Ezekiel.

"There's time enough for that," broke in "Poor Louise," who was feeling the pangs of hunger. "Have either of you got an old crust of bread in your pockets?"

"Bread?" cried the others scornfully, "what do you want that stuff for?"

"To eat, of course."

Words were inadequate to express the contempt with which this simple answer was greeted. They shrugged their shoulders in disdain and turned away to fetch more wine.

"Look here, mates, if you're no hungry, you soon will be. Perhaps you've had food later than I have, but I've tasted nothing since the night before last, and I feel as if a rat were gnawing me here," and he laid his hand upon where his supper ought to have been.

"If you're hungry, why don't you drink, man?" said Tréfouilloux.

"The fool!" snorted Ezekiel, "to talk about an empty stomach in a sea of wine!"

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"Poor Louise," wishing to fortify himself against the pangs he knew so well, took their advice and drank off a long draught of strong wine; but scarcely had he swallowed it than he sank writhing on the floor, moaning:

"I'm burning! Burning like fire!"

For some time they watched him in his agonies, and wondered what was the matter with him, but after continued libations they began to feel a sense of discomfort similar to that which he described by his intermittent wails: "I'm burning! I'm on fire!"

"I begin to feel horribly hot inside!" gasped Ezekiel at last.

"I feel as if I'd swallowed a red-hot plate of iron!" retorted Tréfouilloux in torture.

The whole scene was changed. All gaiety had fled, and three pale, haggard faces looked with horror on the well-filled casks that had been their joy a short time before. They shrank from the luscious wine as if it had been poison, and from their parched lips went up the cry: "It burns, burns like Hades itself!"

They would have given the whole cellar-full of wine for one draught of water, the thing they had drunk the least of in their lives.

"How dark this hole is! I'm choked," panted Tréfouilloux. "Oh, for the sun and air at Nôtre Dame again!"

"And good rain, too," sighed "Poor Louise," "I'd drink every drop I could!"

"I said, 'when we got back to Nôtre Dame,' just now mates, but perhaps—who knows—we may never get back there again," sobbed Tréfouilloux dismally.

At this awful suggestion they all three scrambled to their feet and tried to open the door, but the bolt on the outer side stood firm, and they sank down exhausted to watch the last flickering gleams of their only remaining torch, with the certainty that their own lives had but little longer to last.

From time to time one or the other groaned out a sigh for former days.

"My snug corner under the wall!" sighed Ezekiel.

"My ulcer! my open wound!" moaned Tréfouilloux.

"My four arms and the goat's hoof!" sobbed "Poor Louise."

The torch gave its last flash and all was dark around them. With strained eyes they watched the spot where last they saw the light, and clutched each other in their panic of despair. Hour after hour wore on only to add to their sufferings. Mad with hunger they groped about for more drink, and then cursed the inward fire it fed so cruelly.

They dashed themselves on the casks and fought like wild beasts in their dark lair. Shrieks, groans, oaths rang from their parched and fevered lips, but no one came to to their aid. Gradually the sounds became fainter and less frequent, then a hoarse rattle, a low, long-drawn moan and a spell of silence. With a yell one of the wretched creatures sprang upon the form nearest to him and died with an oath on his lips—Silence again—a few sobs—and all was still.

* * * * *

Three days later my Lord Abbot elected to dine at the Abbey, so a lay-brother was despatched to fetch the wine. Finding that the lock had been tampered with he returned to tell the Prior, and Anselm went, in some alarm, to investigate the matter. When they opened the door a flood of foul air drove them back, and it was some seconds before they could attempt to enter the cellar again. When they did so, a ghastly sight met their view. Three bodies in an advanced state of decomposition lay within. Two of them were locked in a deadly embrace and the fingers of one were fixed tightly in the throat of the other. Recognition was impossible, so the mystery of the Abbot's cellar remained unsolved. The only clue to the identity of the bodies was the discovery of a neatly folded pile of linen on one of the up-turned casks, and that led to the conclusion that the victims were belonging to the marauders who had plundered the Abbey.

Who they were, and how they got into the private cellar, were questions never answered. Some may have missed the distinguished trio from their wonted places in the inclosure, but we may be sure there were plenty to replace them, and equally certain that there were few, if any, to mourn their loss.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CRYSTAL PONIARD.

PARIS was in a state of great excitement, and the old Parisians were talking with a volubility not unworthy of their modern descendants; not about political or international affairs, the mysterious assassin, the war with John of England, or the state of the Holy Land, all these were for the time being forgotten, and even the decision of the Ecclesiastical Council was temporarily thrown into the background by the prevailing curiosity as to the fate of Queen Ingeburge.

Various more or less elaborated versions of the riot were in circulation throughout the city, and the same question rose to the lips of every listener, "Who had organised the attack?"

The students of the University protested their ignorance of the whole affair, with the exception of the tragic fate that had overtaken their leader. The Freemasons swore by Holy Writ that they had had neither part nor lot in the act of sacrilege.

Some malicious tongues whispered that the sudden disappearance of Madame Ingeburge fitted in admirably with the personal desires of Philip Augustus, but on the other hand it was the King's troops who had gone to the rescue, even though they were too late to save the Queen. Where was she? Had she been quietly done to death? Or was she being left to languish in some dark dungeon?

Such questions as these occupied the minds of the bulk of the people of Paris, that large class of sober-minded clear-sighted men and women who generally arrive at the truth when they are not led away by popular agitators or sedition mongers. Most of them still felt a kindly interest in the poor young Queen, whom they had seen come amongst them as a happy and expectant bride, only to find a gaoler instead of a husband, and a cloister instead of a court.

And now perhaps that monastic prison had given place to the tomb, simply because she loved her lord too well to renounce those sacred rights which were hers in the sight of God and man.

Murmurs against the King and his advisers began to find utterance, and men said that if Madame Ingeburge could have shown herself she would soon have had an army to support her cause.

If she were not dead, then her place of concealment was very cleverly chosen, for there were many loving eyes looking for her. Eve, who had quite recovered from the shock of that terrible night, was exercising all her quick brain and womanly intuition to penetrate the darkness that enshrouded the fate of her beloved Angel. Eric had not thought of returning to work, indeed, he was not fit for it, for he had lost much blood from a flesh-wound he received in the fight, so he spent his days wandering about the city and its environs trying to glean some clue to the mystery. Then there was Albret, whose wound from the dagger of Mahmoud-el-Reis had by no means healed, still he was using every effort to further the search, and the King did not discourage it, though he had not taken any public part in the matter. Men said he was waiting till the final decision of the Council was given.

Not only had Madame Ingeburge disappeared, but the celebrated sculptor Jean Cador had never returned to the cathedral since he had been carried out in that deadlike

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swoon. Bishop Maurice de Sully was in great perplexity. The workshop was locked up and he did not like to force the door—the time in which the strange artist had promised to complete his work had elapsed, and he had neither produced the statue, nor come to explain his omission. The dumb negro servants had not been seen either, and Amaury Montruel the only man who had any knowledge of the true state of the work, kept silence for reasons of his own.

One night, as Albret was on his way to the King's apartments, he fancied he saw the sharply defined features of the Syrian in the shadow of a doorway. He darted forward to seize the intruder, but his hand only grasped the air, the figure had vanished like a phantom! The vast corridor was but dimly lighted by candelabra, which hung at intervals from the roof, and when he came to reflect upon the impossibility of Mahmoud-el-Reis having been able to evade the numerous guards, or scale the impregnable walls of the Louvre, which was more fortress than palace, he came to the conclusion that his over-excited brain had played him a trick, and that his mind had brought before him the picture of one of those whom he so eagerly sought.

The fable of Ingeburge's having been spirited away by the Evil One under the disguise of Jean Cador, had caused many an anxious moment to the more ignorant of her partizans. Her personal friends were so convinced of her purity and innocence, that the tale made no impression on them.

Four days had elapsed since the attack on the Abbey, and King Philip Augustus was in his private room that opened out of his sleeping apartment, in deep and affectionate converse with Agnes de Méranie. She was watching him with adoring eyes, and he bent over her with well-feigned tenderness.

"Alas! my dear lord," she was saying as she passed her fingers caressingly through his hair: "Why can I never feel my mind at rest? Why do I love you more and more every day, and yet this love, once the source of so much unalloyed delight, now only tortures me?"

Her eyes softened as she continued pathetically:

"The heart guesses the truth infallibly, and mine tells me, sometimes, that if I suffer, it is because my lord no longer loves me!"

Those who knew the passionate infatuation which the King had shown for Agnes de Méranie, and the empire that her subtle, seductive charms had wielded over him, might have thought to see them together, that the spell was still holding its magic sway.

He met her plaintive appeal with reproachful tenderness, and his eyes seemed still to find the same exquisite pleasure in her beauty. And she was looking her best. These daughters of the Tzeck race are bewitching in the soft subdued light of evening. Their somewhat striking features are toned down, their eyes shine more tenderly, their vigorous vitality yields to langorous grace, and their melodious voices fall harmoniously on the ear that is wearied with the day's excitement. Agnes de Méranie possessed all these charms and knew well how to use them. While the indomitable will and passionate pride of the woman gave fire to her glance, it was veiled by the softer love-light and the tender regrets to which she had given utterance.

"Foolish child!" murmured the King, pressing her hand to his lips. "You know your power over me!"

This answer by no means lulled her fears to rest, and, moreover, she noted with a shudder that his lips were

"My dearest lady, I have been fighting all day for the love of you."

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Standing underneath the lamp was a tall, dark man, wearing the turban and costly dress of a wealthy Saracen.

cold as ice. She looked past him to the burnished mirror which faithfully reflected her radiant beauty, but for once it gave her no satisfaction. What was the good of beauty if it could not keep the love she prized so dearly?

"I believe you, I believe you, my dear lord, for if I doubted you, it would kill me!" was her passionate reply.

He bent and kissed her hand a second time.

She was a consummate actress, but she well knew that in this, as in all else, the King was her superior, and therefore her misgivings were roused to the uttermost. She felt emboldened by the belief that Philip was in total ignorance of her visit to Cadocu at the tavern: but every now and then her heart would fail her as the fateful words rang in her ears—"The King knows *all*."

Perfect silence reigned about them. It was getting late, and they were secure from all interruption, so she braced herself for another effort to regain the ground she felt she had lost.

"Thank you, my dearest lord; you comfort and reassure me, because you pity your poor wife. But love is jealous, and quick to see signs of coldness. I have been banished from your side so much of late. Will you not let me stay with you now and lull you to rest with lute and song as in the happy days we have spent together?"

As he was preparing to answer her the clock struck eleven, and he rose abruptly, saying:

"My dearest lady, I have been fighting all day for the love of you. Not with my sword, but with tongue and brain. Not against men clad in armour, but against wily Churchmen, fenced in with text and dogma, and weaving subtle arguments that bewilder me. When I was fighting against the English I had time to enjoy your sweet society, but in this contest I must keep my brain cool and my nerve steady, so I dare not listen to your sweet songs."

This was her dismissal and she rose at once, hiding her chagrin under the semblance of dutiful submission.

"I must thank you again, my liege, for if you gain the victory, shall I not be the happiest woman in the world? But when will the Council cease their endless sittings?"

He had given her his hand and was leading her to the door.

"To-morrow, at this time, the Council of Bishops will hold their final deliberation, not in the palace, but in the choir of Nôtre Dame, which had the finishing touches put to the roof to-day. At the stroke of midnight Mass will be celebrated, and then the prelates will pronounce the name of the Queen!"

At these words, spoken in a tone of tender gallantry, he stooped and kissed her hand for the third time, and she felt, with a sense of exultation, that she might safely substitute her own name for that of the title she was so eager to wear.

She pressed his hand gratefully, and with another eloquent glance, passed out of the door.

Amaury Montruel, clad in full armour, was keeping his accustomed watch outside his royal master's room. He bowed his head respectfully as Madame Agnes swept by him, but she barely acknowledged his humble salutation.

"Good night, Amaury," said the King kindly.

"May God keep your majesty, and give you peaceful sleep!" was the fervent answer.

"Thank you," replied the King as he went in and shut the door, whereupon his faithful "Friend" lay down, still fully armed, across the threshold.

As soon as he was alone, Philip Augustus gave a deep sigh of utter weariness, and began talking to himself:

"Ingeburge was a King's daughter—she was beautiful, and she loved me!—but—there must be a demon in the heart of man—or else such women as——"

He broke off, and stepping cautiously to the door, shot two small bolts to secure himself on the inside, even while he was so ably guarded from without.

Then, smiling at his own precaution, he went towards his sleeping apartment. The royal couch was in a kind of a box, the sides and cover of which were beautifully carved outside and hung with rich curtains within. As was his wont the King called his page Albret, almost mechanically, for he

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knew that he had no need to raise his voice, as the youth was quick of hearing and always at his post.

Having called once, he thought no more about it, but went to draw back the curtains of his luxurious couch.

"Poor Ingeburge," he resumed meditatively, "what can have become of her? She would be just twenty-two now. She has suffered cruelly, I fear, and now—what if her happiness should come too late?"

His eyes fell on the silken coverlet, and just where it met the pillow he saw a glittering speck. Wondering how it got there, he put out his hand to pick up the stray gem, as he thought it, but scarcely had his fingers touched it, when he shrank back with a shudder, and uttered a low stifled cry.

The supposed gem was the point of a delicate crystal poniard, sharper than any steel and fine as a needle, bearing on the hilt an inscription in Arabic characters.

For the first time in his life Philip Augustus knew what the cold, clammy sweat of fear was!

Everyone in those days knew of the terrible and mysterious assassinations effected by the emissaries of the dreaded "Lord of the Mountain;" they knew the deadly significance of the crystal poniard, inscribed with a passage from the Koran, in the name of the Grand Master of the *Fédavi*.

Had the fortifications of the Louvre been assailed and taken? The walls razed? The garrison massacred or bribed? How else could the assassin have penetrated to the King's most private room? Popular credulity attributed supernatural powers to these Syrian fanatics, but Philip Augustus had no faith in such tales. He still held the deadly little weapon in his hand and was looking at it as if it fascinated him in spite of himself.

"Albret!" he called again, adding to himself, "Can *he* be the traitor?"

Most men would have felt crushed by this evidence of betrayal, and have cast their suspicions broadcast upon those around them; but his brain remained clear and his judgement just.

"No, no," he said, turning to the door where "The Friend of the King" was keeping guard, "it's not poor Albret. The traitor lies in that direction. But now that I've bolted the door, the assassin will find it difficult to follow his poniard to-night."

He heard a slight noise behind him, and, thinking it was the tardy page, he remarked without looking round:

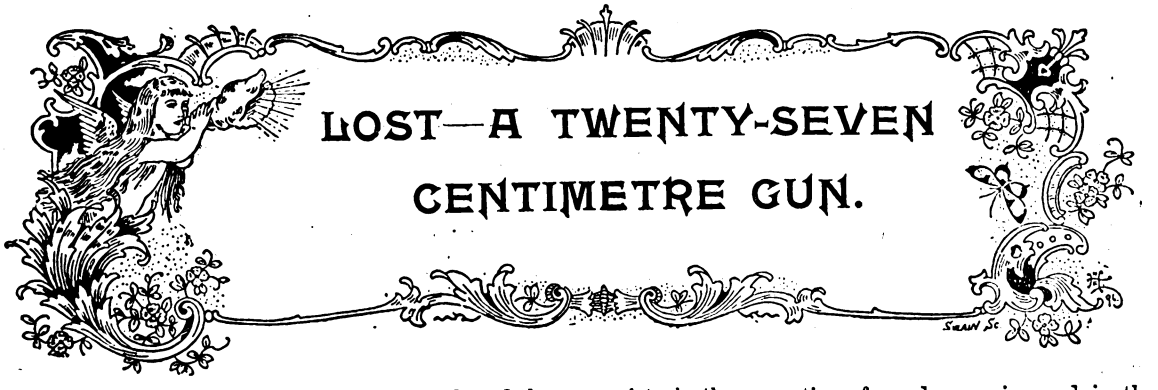
"You are very late to-night, my dear Albret!"

Then, as there was no reply, he turned, and saw a strange sight. Standing underneath the lamp was a tall, dark man, wearing the turban and costly dress of a wealthy Saracen!

Above his forehead there gleamed from the folds of his headdress an aigrette of rare gems, which scintillated in the light like fiery sparks, and from his girdle, which was interwoven with two ropes of pearls and emeralds, there hung a glittering scimitar.

The King stood aghast, believing himself to be the victim of some optical delusion, and the stranger neither moved nor spoke.

(*To be continued.*)



THERE was a great bustle and confusion on board the sloop-of-war *La Gaillarde*. *Dieu merci!* It was not occasioned by hostile preparation; on the contrary, the general commotion which prevailed was of the most pacific kind. *La Gaillarde* was to be unrigged, and from stern to stern, from the keel to the tallest topmast, every part of the brave ship was being inspected, registered, stamped, and ticketed with the most scrupulous care. It was no trifling affair, nor a mere formality, but a real methodical scrutiny.

During the past sixteen years that she had been lying off Alexandria *La Gaillarde* had already undergone several such trials. But all dismantlings are not alike, and a ship may be unrigged by order of the Government at least ten times, without even a single rat in her hold being disturbed in its habits. All the old provisions are kept on board, and the only change that takes place consists in the execution of sundry repairs, and in the renewal of certain details.

Such was the fate of the corvette *La Gaillarde*. She had been administratively inspected five or six times, but finally strict orders had arrived from the Admiralty for the ship to be completely unrigged while at station in the harbour of Toulon. Therefore the army of rats occupying the hull were in a state of terrible disturbance.

For two days every nook and corner had been ransacked, turned topsy-turvy, and old Quartermaster Lehnblot, who was only too glad to seize the opportunity to revenge the loss of divers pairs of trousers and three or four pairs of shoes, untimely victims to the rapacious quadrupeds, had made a perfect hetacomb of these trespassers upon his private property.

Ah, how merrily the rats had spent their time all these long years, living peacefully and growing fat in

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perpetual ease and security. How many jackets, caps, crackers, and dried vegetables had been nibbled and devoured in secret? But even a rat's felicity must come to an end.

Lehnblot, his hands plunged in the depths of his pockets, and his mouth puckered up in a whistle, stood in a passage-way, looking down upon the slaughtered enemies bleeding at his feet. He was congratulating himself upon his victory over at least this number of the abhorred creatures, who could now torment him no longer. He was sunk in deep reflection, when he heard the lieutenant hailing him from the upper deck. In an instant Lehnblot, twirling his cap between his bony fingers, appeared in the presence of the commander, the purser, the lieutenant, and midshipman, all of whom had just been exploring the vessel together.

"Lehnblot," asked the commander, "how many guns are there on board?"

"Four, sir," answered the quartermaster, astounded at such a question.

"Were there never more than four? You ought to know, as you have been on board longer than anybody else."

"I believe, sir, that I heard the former lieutenant say that there used to be five guns, but I never saw more than four."

"Well," said the commander, "you hear that, purser; there is most likely a mistake in the registers. It is very strange, however, that your predecessors did not verify it, and much to be regretted that you never discovered this error yourself. The case must be made clear. I may rely upon you, may I not?"

"Never fear, sir, I will make a thorough search."

The inspection ended, Purser Lacarlingue went immediately to his cabin, where he commenced thumbing and turning over all the registers, account books, documents, and papers that he could lay his hands upon, but after four hours of hard work he had found nothing.

"Hang the gun. To-morrow morning all the ships papers must be sent in right trim to the Admiralty under hand and seal of the commander. What is to be done?"

That night Purser Lacarlingue dined most uncomfortably. After leaving the table, he sent for Lehnblot.

"You know all about the ship's accounts," he said to the quartermaster, "come and help me to go over them again, we *must* find that gun," and both men with the same earnestness made another useless search through all the papers.

"'Pon my soul," exclaimed the purser, striking his fist upon the table, "that beats everything I ever heard of! A twenty-seven centimetre gun disappeared without leaving any trace! A cask of rum, or a box of biscuits can be lost, but not a ship's gun!"

"But not a ship's gun!" echoed Lehnblot. "*Mon Dieu!* A cannon can't be prigged like a quid of tobacco!"

"*Allons, mon vieux*, let's hunt for it once more," said the disconsolate purser.

Dawn, commencing to glimmer over the blue waters of the Mediterranean, found the two officers still searching desperately but in vain. One gun out of five was yet missing.

"One of the documents must be lost," murmured the wretched purser dolefully.

"Perhaps it has been eaten up by the rats. The cursed beasts are capable of anything," replied Lehnblot.

"Maybe you are right," said poor Lacarlingue, turning over nervously the pages of his report, and casting a melancholy glance at the numerous misdeeds attributed therein to Lehnblot's bitter foes. For a few moments he remained absorbed in thought, then, bounding to his feet, he courageously seized his pen and wrote in a steady hand a few lines upon a sheet of paper, which he presented to Lehnblot.

"What do you say to that, old fellow?" he shouted in triumphant tones.

The quartermaster read the words; turned the paper upside down, and opened his eyes and mouth wide in amazement.

"Do—do you believe that will go—go down?" he stammered.

"No doubt of it. The commander will have no time to read the document; he will sign it, and once in the office, nobody will think anything more about the concern."

Two hours later, a gig left the sloop's side, transporting to the shore the report relative to the inventory of *La Gaillarde*.

"Is it all right?" the commander had simply asked before sealing the document.

"Yes, sir."

"And how about that lost gun?"

"I found out the mistake," answered Lacarlingue, rubbing his hands together in great satisfaction that the vexatious affair was ended at last.

But the purser's conscience was probably not quite at ease. If you had met him on the quay of Toulon a few weeks afterwards, you would certainly have noticed that he looked troubled, as though some serious preoccupation was weighing heavily upon his mind, and his anxiety seemed to increase whenever he was called to the officers to transact any business for the ship.

One morning, as he was passing through a hall at the "Bureau de l'Amirâtué," he met one of his friends, a head clerk, who rushed up to him, saying: "You have come in the nick of time, Lacarlingue; the inventory report of *La Gaillarde* has just been sent back to us from the minister's office."

"Have you opened it?" inquired Lacarlingue, breathless with emotion.

"Why, no, I haven't."

"May I see the document?"

"Nothing so easy, *cher ami*; come, it is here in my office."

Purser Lacarlingue followed his friend; a cold shiver ran through his whole frame when he began turning the pages of that too well-known report. Suddenly he drew a sigh of relief—so deep, so profound, that two underclerks, perched upon their high stools, startled at the noise, turned sharply round, wondering how a whale had ever been able to get into the office.

This is what Lacarlingue had read in the report: First, the following lines in his own handwriting, under the head of "Losses and Damages":

LOST STORES.

NATURE OF OBJECT.	NUMBER.	DATE OF LOSS.	CAUSE OF LOSS.
Twenty-seven centimetre gun.	1	Unknown.	Eaten up by the rats.

and opposite in the column of "Observations," these words, traced by an all-powerful hand:

Approved for the rarity of the fact.
First Lord of Admiralty,
DU HAUBAN.

MARY E. PLUMMER.

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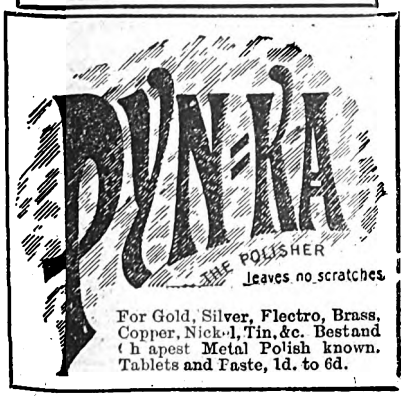

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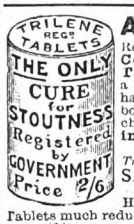

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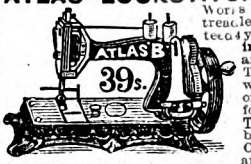

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST,

A. L. would like to know what is the meaning of the term "brass-plate coal merchants," which he saw in an old book.———It was a term used in the trade to denote the middlemen who acted as agents on commission. In the course of a Parliamentary inquiry into the coal trade it was shown that five-sixths of the London public were supplied by these middlemen.

B.—British possessions in Africa extend over an area of two and a half millions of square miles—almost equal to the area of the United States.

PAPER.—Tissue paper was originally made to place between tissue cloth of gold or silver, to prevent fraying when folded.

B. I.—It is estimated that there are 51,000 breweries in the world, and considerably more than one-third of them are in Germany.

MITE.—St. Swithin was the Bishop of Winchester and tutor of King Alfred. His wish was to be buried in the open air, but the monks, on the contrary, desired that it should be in the chancel of the cathedral. The tradition is that the saint sent a heavy rain on the 15th of July, the day appointed for the ceremony, which occasioned its postponement from day to day for forty days. Tired out with waiting they buried him in the churchyard.

COINS.—Twice during the last century a mistake was made in the spelling of the Latinised form of the King's name on our halfpence. In 1730 the name was given as "Geogius," instead of Georgius, and in 1772 some half-pennies left the Mint with the name "Georius." On the latter occasion a reward was offered for each piece returned to the Mint.

ROYAL.—In the way of palaces, the imperial family of Japan leads easily. There are thirty palaces belonging to them in different parts of Japan, but the present Emperor has occupied only three or four, and has never even seen some of them. The quality of several may be described as "doubtful."

PENAL.—The Belgian convict receives payment from the authorities, just as his British companion in crime. Three-tenths of his earnings are given to him when his term of imprisonment has expired.

T. LANG.—It is a strange fact that injuries to the tongue, whether of man or animal, heal more quickly than those of any other part of the body. This is probably because it is kept warm, free from dirt, and continually moistened.

METER.—If you mark a circle one inch in diameter on an Ordnance map of the inch scale, the area contained within that circle will be as near as possible 500 acres. That will probably serve your purpose.

TIME.—Yes, that was the record year in point of length. It is now called "46 B.C." and "the year of confusion," and it had 445 days. The year, as previously arranged, had not been of the proper length, and the calendar and the seasons had got mixed up. Julius Cæsar rearranged the length of the year, and added a number of days to the one in progress in order to bring the months into conformity with the seasons.

H. T. H. asks: "Which people may claim the distinction of being physically the finest in Europe?" ———From an "all-round" point of view, the gipsies of Hungary. They are splendid specimens of humanity, and they are rarely ill. Their wounds heal with surprising quickness and usually without the application of medicaments, thus testifying to the purity of their blood.

L. A.—The word "ax" or "axe" for "ask," which is common in some parts of the kingdom, is really an old Saxon word. You will find it in Chaucer and Wycliffe, and in a letter addressed to Henry VII. by his mother, as well as in other writings.

PLAY.—In proportion to its population, Italy has more theatres than any other country in the world.

R. T.—Yes, the annual fair at Nijni-Novgorod is being modernised, like most other things. It used to be the most primitive in Europe—an exhibition of Orientalism in people, manners, and products; but it is now merely an exhibition to exploit the latest productions of Russia.

NATURALIST.—If you wish to make the experiment of taming a trapped rat, there is no valid reason why you should not do so. Try the plan of making the creature drink all the water it needs from a spoon, which you can insert into the trap through a specially made and narrow opening, holding the spoon by the handle. This plan is frequently successful.

U. S.—The length of the coast line of the United States is 5,715 miles. This is made up of 2,349 miles on the Atlantic ocean, 1,556 on the Gulf of Mexico, and 1,810 on the Pacific ocean.

NEXT week a collecting-sheet will be inclosed with every copy of *Short Stories*, and I shall be greatly obliged if my readers will see they get it.

W. R.—The entire population of England at the time of the Conqueror did not exceed 2,000,000.

PENMAN.—Reed pens, split at the ends like quill pens, have been found in Egyptian tombs, and probably date back to 2,500 years before the Christian Era.

MEDALLIST.—You are probably referring to the "Indian Chief" medal, an interesting military decoration of the period of George III., which was issued to Indian chiefs during the American War. On the reverse is a representation of the American wolf snarling at the British lion at a respectful distance.

G. H. K.—No, there is not a solitary peer in the House of Lords who was there at the time of the Queen's accession to the throne.

CURIOUS.—The Grand Opera House in Paris is the largest building of the kind in the world. It covers more than three acres of ground, and cost a quarter of a million sterling.

W. R.—The percentage of illiterates in this country is 7. When the Queen came to the throne, 40 per cent. of the people could not write their names.

S. D. has read that there are more than two thousand millionaires in Berlin and emphatically expresses the opinion that the statement is false.———The statement is not improbable. You forget that the Germans do not reckon in pounds, but in marks, a mark being roughly equal to a shilling. A Frenchman is a millionaire if he has a million francs (£40,000).

NAT asks if I know whether a monument has ever been erected to the joint memory of the commanders of opposing forces.———Yes, there is a famous monument of that kind in Canada. On the Plains of Abraham there is a memorial to Wolf and Montcalme, who both fell at the taking of Quebec.

T. B. G.—The longest paved street in the world is Washington Street, Boston, which is seventeen and a half miles long.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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NO. 491. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 28TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

A LESSON TO BREADWINNERS UPON CHEAP LIVING.

Every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, desires pleasant and palatable food and drink. The only question of how to satisfy this natural desire is too often one of expense. If, therefore, it can be explained how a food that is at the same time a delicious beverage, and thus answers a double purpose in the building up of the human constitution, can be the means of a considerable saving to breadwinners in the household, we know that the explanation will be read with interest by many thousands of readers.

To say that we all eat too much flesh food and drink too much tea or coffee is unnecessary. This is fully understood by the majority of us; but another question arises. De we not, as students of economy in household matters, eat too much bread?

There is no doubt that we live in an age of worry and excitement, and as the struggle for existence is anything but conducive to good digestion or an appetite that can relish anything, the palate of the average work-a-day individual has to be tickled and tempted in a variety of ways.

Many people are bewildered what to turn to for a beverage which shall be at once agreeable to the taste and, in these days of dear bread, supply the desired nourishing and stimulating qualities.

We dwellers in Britain are, to a great extent, the creatures of circumstance. Our insular position makes us almost utterly dependent upon "over-sea" food supplies, and we are helpless in the hands of the merchant-capitalists, whose high prerogative it is to govern and fix the marketable value of our imports. The toiling millions who are using up brain and muscle, sinew and nerve, in life's fierce and wearying struggle, as breadwinners for their helpless families, have to face these stern facts.

This embarrassing condition of affairs with regard to the staff of life—an article of absolute necessity in every home—has called public attention to the merits of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa as supplying a long-felt want in this direction. It is not simply a cocoa, but a preparation of ingredients, which give it great nutritive and invigorating qualities. It is, therefore, not merely a pleasant beverage, but a food and a tonic in the bargain.

Compared with the cost of bread, or any other food commodity for breakfast and supper, it is the means of hundreds of families effecting quite a considerable saving.

The success of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa has certainly been phenomenal—even the Chancellor of the Exchequer admits this—and the reason is obvious. Vi-Cocoa is neither a medicine nor a mere thirst-assuager. It is a food at the same time that it is a beverage, and it is highly serviceable to everybody, especially the workers in mills and shops of various kinds among whom tea has hitherto been so excessively drunk; while it has the further advantage of being easily digested and of agreeing with the most delicate stomach.

We leave it to the reader to consult common-sense, and at once to substitute Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa—if this has not already been done—for ordinary food and drink at breakfast and other meals.

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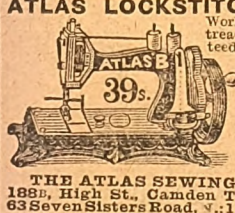

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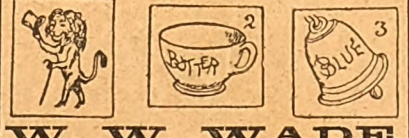

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SHORT STORIES

TALES OF LOVE WIT PATHOS HUMOUR STRATEGY ETC.

No. 491.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending May 28th, 1898.

Edited by ARTHUR PEARSON

The Unprofessional Detective.

PROFESSOR GILMAN was sitting in the library at the Royal Astronomical Society, putting the finishing touches to a lecture on double stars, when a card was handed to him.

He was rather vexed at being interrupted, but he felt bound to see his visitor—Lieutenant Clifford; and, putting his papers aside, he rose and went into the waiting-room.

Lieutenant Clifford met the professor with a pleasant smile and extended hand, and then introduced a gentleman whom he called Mr. Gray. The professor gave this gentleman a keen glance, and then turned to the lieutenant, and waited to hear what he had to say.

The lieutenant seemed at some loss how to begin; but, after a moment's hesitation, said:

"Professor Gilman, I do not suppose I have the slightest right to come here this morning upon the business that has brought me, and it is only at the earnest solicitations of my friend, Mr. Gray, that I have consented to come. Mr. Gray is a detective, and he is at work upon a puzzling case. In conversation with me, last evening, he expressed discouragement in the matter, and I remarked that if he could manage to enlist your services I was sure his difficulties would soon vanish. I then told him of your masterly detective abilities and of the clever manner in which you cleared up the mystery of Colonel Cresswell's death, and nothing would do but I must bring him to you. I know that I am trespassing very greatly upon your good nature, but I hope you will be kind enough to help Mr. Gray, and I think you will be interested in the problem."

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Professor Gilman was a great man in the scientific world, but he was only human, and his vanity was tickled by the reference to the Cresswell case. He had taken that affair in hand when the detectives were quite puzzled, simply because Clifford—the son of an old friend—was pecuniarily concerned in it, and he had solved the problem with surprising rapidity.

He now announced his willingness to assist Mr. Gray, if possible, and a few minutes later the three were seated in the library and Gray was giving particulars of the case.

"This is a case of robbery," began the detective, "the theft of some very valuable diamonds—at least, the jewels have disappeared; and there is every reason to suppose they were stolen. The robbery occurred at the house of a wealthy gentleman named Hilton, in Crown Street. It was first noticed that the diamonds were missing about a week ago. Four stones were missing altogether; one large and very valuable one, which formed the centre of a breast-pin, two lesser, but still costly ones, which were set as pendants in ear-rings, and a fourth, still smaller, which was set in a ring. This fourth stone, and the settings of all of them, have been discovered, but the most diligent search has failed to reveal the whereabouts of the other gems.

"When I took charge of the case, the facts which the owners of the jewels were able to give me were of the most meagre kind. Summed up, they amounted to little more than that the things had disappeared, that there was no evidence of burglars having entered the house, and that, consequently, some one of the servants must have taken them. It transpired that the mistress of the house was very careless about her jewels, that she was in the habit of leaving them in an unlocked jewel case on her dressing-table; sometimes, so her husband averred, she did not take the trouble to even put them in the jewel case, but left them stuck upon a pin-cushion or in some other equally tempting position. Moreover, when she was out in the afternoon or evening, the door of her room was seldom locked; and it would have been the easiest thing in the world for any of the servants to slip into the room, gather up whatever treasures might be lying about, and slip out again without anybody being the wiser. One servant could do it as easily as another. Angie, Mrs. Hilton's maid, would, of course, have a better opportunity than the others. But she is a woman in whom Mrs. Hilton puts implicit trust.

"The first thing I did was to institute a very thorough search throughout all the rooms in the house. Angie, the maid, was not only willing, but eager to have her room and all her belongings searched. People with reputations for honesty sometimes succumb to temptation, therefore, we did not make less thorough search in Angie's room, because of her mistress's faith in her. But we found nothing in her room.

"The other servants included a butler, a French male cook, a scullery maid, and a housemaid. I instituted, apparently with the greatest willingness on the part of each, just as rigid a search in their respective rooms as I had done in Angie's. The result in each case was the same. The missing jewels were nowhere to be found.

"I was not alone in prosecuting the search. The servants, who all knew of the missing stones before I took up the case, were searching, one and all, for the lost jewels. With all the servants cognizant of the loss, and consequently more on their guard against suspicion, my difficulties were multiplied, as you can imagine.

"On the second day after the loss was discovered, François, the French cook, brought me the gold settings of the ring, pin, and ear-rings.

"He had found them in the rubbish box in the yard behind the house—at least, he said so. But the diamonds were still missing.

"Well, I felt convinced that the guilty person was someone in the house; presumably one of the servants, as there was no reason to suspect that Mr. Hilton would steal them from his wife, or that their daughter, Maud, a girl of fifteen, would steal them from her mother. From the list of possible guilty ones I was disposed to leave out also the maid, Angie. This left the cook; Kitson, the butler; Mary, the scullery maid; and Jane, the housemaid.

"The fact that François found the settings may be counted either for or against him, as one views the case; it may have been a genuine discovery or a mere "blind." There is, however, more damaging evidence against him.

"In searching through those portions of the house over which François presided, I was not forgetful of the case in which a chef concealed some stolen diamonds in a loaf of bread, and I was on the look out for all sorts of odd places where these jewels might possibly be hidden. But the diamonds were not concealed in eatables of any kind; for we subjected everything of that nature to the most searching examination. However, this line of search resulted indirectly in the finding of one of the missing jewels—the smallest.

"Kitson, having witnessed some of the odd places and things that had been so carefully examined by me, said jestingly to the cook: 'François, I think you must have those diamonds in that bottle of wine which you are so careful about.' Then turning to me, the butler said: 'François has a bottle of rare vintage, which is his very own, and I don't know how many years old. He takes a little sip of it now and then, but he won't let any of us look at it hardly.'

"'Ah,' I said, 'suppose we look at the bottle.'

"François brought it with great cheerfulness, and hospitably invited me to take a sip. The bottle was about half full, and the glass being clear, I could easily see, by turning it on its side and revolving it slowly, that the diamonds were not in the wine.

"I was about to return it to François, when I bethought me of the cork. Extracting it from the bottle, I scrutinised it carefully, and fancied I could see a faint line, as if the cork had been slit part of the way up and then glued together again. Taking my penknife, I cut the cork in two parts, and lo! reposing snugly in a little hollow in the centre, was the smallest of the missing diamonds.

"François stared, turned pale, and began to protest his utter ignorance as to how the diamond got into that cork. Kitson came bravely to the cook's defence, and said emphatically that he didn't believe François was guilty in spite of the evidence against him. He thought it was 'a put up job,' the work of someone who had a grudge against him.

"Well, there isn't a cork in all that house now that has not been cut in two—or a dozen—parts; but the other three diamonds are still undiscovered. Their whereabouts is a complete mystery. Of course, it looks black for François; but I am not yet convinced that he is guilty. He continues to earnestly protest his innocence, and Kitson stands by him unfalteringly. Every place that I can think of where François could possibly conceal the other diamonds has been most carefully searched. But the result has always been the same. I

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believe the diamonds must be concealed somewhere in that house, but where is beyond my comprehension. I am at my wit's end in the matter."

"And you want to splice my wits on to where yours end? Is that it?" inquired Professor Gilman.

"Yes; that expresses it very well."

The professor sat musing for a moment. Whether this particular case interested him, or whether his appetite for solving difficult problems had been whetted by his success in the Cresswell case, I am unable to say. I have only to report the fact that before sixty seconds had elapsed after the last words of the detective, Professor Gilman said:

"Very well, I will see what I can do. Let us take a cab, and go up to the house in Crown Street."

Lieutenant Clifford, having other duties, left the professor and the detective, and they proceeded to the house together.

Arrived at the Hilton House, Mr. Gray and the professor entered, and the latter asked to be permitted to see the room from which the jewels had been taken. His examination of the room was only cursory, his object being to note its relative position to other rooms in the house, and the ease or difficulty with which it might be reached from the servants' quarters. Then he said he would like to go down to the kitchen.

The finding of the diamond in the cork of the wine bottle had been regarded as sufficient evidence against François to warrant his being detained by the police, and in place of the Frenchman there was now installed a portly female cook, of not uncomely face and figure, to whom Kitson had already begun to make love in a mild fashion.

Kitson had a large flat face and small eyes. The professor cast one of his keen glances at him, then favoured each of the other servants in the same way, and after that seemingly took little notice of them. He suggested to Mr. Gray, somewhat to the latter's surprise, that he ask the servants to help him in the search. The professor made a rather careful examination of the kitchen and the adjacent rooms, propounding an occasional question to the detective. Kitson and the other servants, unaware who the distinguished man was, indulged in some scarcely-concealed merriment at the professor's participation in the case.

After looking about for half an hour, some of the time in what seemed like purposeless fashion, the professor, in a low tone, said to the detective:

"Now, I want you to get these servants away from me—all but the new cook; she's busy about her cooking, and will not mind me, nor I her. The others will follow you easily enough. They're not afraid of me, and they are of you. Ask Kitson and the others to help you look for the diamonds up on the second floor. You've looked there before, but never mind. They'll think you suppose you may have overlooked some place."

The professor was in the scullery in the basement, when he said this, and he stayed there with pretence of poking about while the detective, Kitson, and the maid left and ascended to the rooms on the second floor. Then the professor went out into a back passage which he had a few minutes before been searching. Here his eyes rested eagerly on a row of iron hooks against the wooden partition.

On one of the hooks hung a faded and somewhat worn coat. This the professor took off its hook, and began making a thorough examination of the various pockets. About the only thing he found in the pockets was a soiled envelope which had passed through the post. The professor read the name on the envelope, and then returned it to the pocket. He did not return the coat to the hook until he had felt all along where the lining was sewed to the material. Had there been anything as large as one of the missing diamonds concealed within the lining or in any of the pockets, he would certainly have found it. But he found nothing, and after hanging the coat back on the hook he stood with a perplexed look on his face.

After pondering a little while his face brightened suddenly, and he went down into the kitchen once more. In his previous search there he had noticed a screwdriver among other tools in a box. Securing this, he returned to the passage.

A quarter of an hour later the professor appeared in the room where the detective and the others were searching. For a few minutes or so he joined in the search, and then he remarked that there was no use searching in this blind fashion, and suggested to Gray that they had better give it up for a while and take a walk.

The butler let them out at the front door, casting a rather derisive smile after the professor as he descended the steps.

"Well," the detective said, after they had walked a short distance, "have you formed any opinion as to who is the guilty party or as to where the jewels are?"

"Yes," replied the professor. "I may say that I formed an opinion about the thief before I came to the house, and after I reached there I verified it. Kitson is the guilty man."

"Kitson!"

"Yes. And as to the jewels——"

"You think you know where the diamonds are?"

"Yes, I'm sure I do. I've got them in my hand!"

And the professor unfolded a piece of crumpled paper and exposed to the detective's astonished gaze the three missing diamonds.

The professor enjoyed the detective's astonishment for a moment, and then said:

"Listen. I will tell you how I came to find them so quickly. When you told me how the smaller of the missing stones was found in the cork I at once thought, 'That proves the cook's innocence rather than confirms his guilt. If he had known the diamond was concealed in the cork, he would certainly have substituted another before bringing the bottle to you. He would have taken no risk.' That he didn't, I say, is proof that he didn't know it was concealed there. But somebody, of course, did know it. And who was this person? Naturally, the one who suggested looking there; and Kitson was that person. It's simple enough, isn't it?"

"Yes," returned the detective. "Of course, I have thought Kitson might be the guilty person, and the fact that he suggested examining the wine bottle is against him. The thought isn't new; it occurred to me at the time. But the manful way in which he defended François staggered me. If he wanted to cast suspicion on him, it seemed to me he wouldn't be the first to defend him."

"That's where the man's cunning comes in. His cunning isn't of a specially high order; still, he has considerable of it such as it is, and he doubtless thought that if he could once get suspicion definitely directed towards François he could very well afford to defend him—first, because such defence would count for but little for François, and second, because it would have the effect of lessening suspicion against himself provided any were disposed to suspect him on account of

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his suggestion that the bottle be examined. Kitson wasn't really wise in the matter, else he would have put all the diamonds in one place and made no attempt to cast suspicion on another, but simply taken his chance with the rest. Had he been wiser he would have reflected that when a guilty man is confronted with proof of his guilt, nine times out of ten he will falter and confess. He, of course, knew that when the diamonds should be found in the cork François could not confess and tell where the other stolen diamonds were, for the good reason that he didn't know.

"Kitson should, therefore, have known that when a detective, familiar with this principle in crime, saw that François failed to confess, the finding of the diamond in his bottle would tend rather to remove suspicion than to cast it upon him.

"I reasoned thus, at all events, and I entered upon the task of hunting for these diamonds, reasonably certain that François was not the thief, and equally confident that Kitson was, because he was the person to throw out the hint about the wine bottle. Perhaps you will inquire why he selected François as the person upon whom suspicion should be cast—what animus prompted that particular selection? I can't tell you. There may have been jealousies; I haven't inquired.

"Convinced in my mind of Kitson's guilt, when I arrived at the house and began a search in his presence I did a very simple and natural thing—I watched him. I didn't seem to, it is true, and I suppose he has no idea that I did. In fact, I think he summed me up as a harmless and rather brainless old man—one of whom he need have little fear. While I was searching, and seeming not to notice him, I kept my eye constantly upon him, noting the slightest changes of expression on his face. If the diamonds were concealed anywhere about the house I believed that so long as I had Kitson with me I could tell when it was 'getting hot,' as children say when they play 'hide and seek.' That was why I wanted him with me in the search. I proposed to make him tell me, not by words but by his face, where the diamonds were hidden. And I made him do it, though he doesn't suspect it yet.

"I could see, when we were searching in the kitchen, that he was unconcerned and quite easy in mind. But when we came into that passage there came upon the face of my man the very expression I was looking for.

"It wasn't a marked change of expression. Not at all. It was a change to be felt rather than seen, if I may so state it. It was as if his own growing trepidation of spirit on approaching near to the hiding-place of the gems, his own vague apprehensions that, after all, the hiding-place was not secure, were subtly communicable to me. It was thus I read him, and I said to myself as we went into the passage: 'It is indeed, getting hot. In another moment he will tell me where the diamonds are hidden.' And he did. He cast one quick, apprehensive glance at the wall where an old coat hung upon a hook, and I said to myself, 'Now, Kitson, you can go; I have no further need of you.'

"I made a pretence of searching further, until Kitson's apprehensions were quieted and I could say a word to you. Then, after you had all left me, I returned to the passage. 'He's a bolder man than I thought,' I said to myself, as I took the coat from the hook and began to search pockets and lining. Yes, sir, I actually thought, at first, that he had counted on the very boldness of such a course misleading people—that no one would subject an old coat hanging up in such a conspicuous place to a thorough examination, and therefore, that the diamonds might safely be hidden in the lining. Such an act would have been folly or genius, according to how it resulted. But Kitson's genius was not of that bold order. I did not find in the coat what I was looking for, and when I had fully assured myself that no diamonds were concealed in it, I thought, 'Is it possible I was mistaken in Kitson's look? If I was, then I am at sea, and may as well give up.' But I did not really believe I was mistaken.

"I pondered a little, and then the idea which should have come to me first, flashed upon me. Getting a screw-driver, I removed the screws that held in place the iron hook on which the coat hung, and snugly ensconced in a little hole behind the hook, I found, wrapped in a piece of paper, the things I was looking for. I secured the hook in its original position once more, and Kitson still fancies the diamonds are safe. Now let us go back to the house and inform our cunning butler that his booty has taken wings."

"Professor," said the detective admiringly, "pardon the expression, but you are a gem!"

The professor smiled.

"But," continued the detective, "Kitson will deny all knowledge of how the diamonds came there. How are you going to prove his connection with them?"

"Patience!" returned the professor.

Kitson met them at the door, and seemed a little surprised at their early return.

"Kitson," said the professor, without any preliminary beating about the bush, "we have found the stolen diamonds, and we know that you are the thief. You may as well acknowledge it first as last."

The butler's face grew red with rage, and his small eyes looked hatred at the professor.

"You lie, you old idiot, and you know it!" he cried. "You come poking about here, and then accuse a respectable man of being a thief. It's my belief that you, and this other smooth-faced scoundrel!"—with a glance at the detective—"know a good deal more about them stolen goods than you've told."

"It's true; we do," the professor said blandly. "And it's our purpose now to tell what we know. You stole the diamonds, threw away the settings, placed the least valuable one in Francois' bottle in a mean attempt to cast suspicion on him, and then concealed the others behind a hook in the passage downstairs."

"You lie!" shouted Kitson, but his face blanched.

"Steady!" said the professor. "When you hid the diamonds you forgot that you were hiding with them convincing evidence against yourself. It wasn't shrewd of you to roll the diamonds up in an old envelope that was addressed to you," and the professor produced a little parcel. Unfolding it, he displayed the diamonds to Kitson, and held up to his gaze the paper from which he had just unrolled them. It was the old envelope which Professor Gilman had found in the coat hanging upon the hook. It was addressed to "Mr. J. Kitson."

Kitson stared dumfounded. Then he found his voice.

"I didn't wrap them in that paper. I wouldn't be such a fool!"

"What did you use?—a piece of newspaper?" inquired the professor innocently.

"Yes; I was very particular not to take anything that would—" then he stopped abruptly.

"Well, it's unimportant what paper you used," the professor said, with a cold smile, "since you admit using some. Mr. Gray," turning to the detective, "I will leave this man for you to deal with now. I must go and finish my lecture."

James Perry.

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Born of a Tear.

In bygone ages, and in a distant land, there once lived an old king and bard, who was wont to sing a beautiful poem as he sat on the shore of the murmuring sea. His own tones impressed him so deeply that he would weep, and the tears, rolling down his cheeks, fell into the waves below, where they were changed into pearls.

About three hundred years ago it came to pass that a fisherman found in his nets one of these beautiful pearls, shaped like a heart, and the Doge of Venice presented it to Her Excellency Centarina Centarini, the wife of one of the lords of the Republic.

In spite of youth, wealth, and beauty, Centarina was not happy, for, in the third year of her married life, she had lost her only child. Twelve anniversaries had come and gone since that fatal day, and neither she nor her husband dared hope that Heaven would send them another treasure in place of the little dead girl.

One day, as Centarina was stepping out of her gondola to attend a sermon at the Church of San Zanipola, a poor old woman, followed by two lean and ragged urchins, begged her for a little alms in very pathetic tones. Centarina handed her a sequin, which the beggar received with an outburst of gratitude, crying:

"May Heaven bless your excellency, you, and your children! May the Holy Madonna fill you with joy!"

The fair Venetian was somewhat affected by these words as she entered the church, where a monk was preaching on education. He illustrated his discourse by the story of the Roman matron, Cornelia, who had said of her sons:

"These are my jewels!"

"Ah," thought Centarina, "If only I still had my precious child instead of the costly pearl the Doge has given me!"

After the sermon, as she was returning to the palace of the Madonna dell'Orto, she fell asleep in her gondola, and thought she heard a voice utter the strange words:

"If you do not wish to lose her, beware of poetry and of music!"

She awoke with a start, bewildered by her dream, and filled with an unaccountable anxiety. On reaching her palace an unusual disturbance was the greeting that awaited her, caused by a dispute among the servants, who ran towards her, all talking at the same time, each accusing the other of having left the front door open. Some person, they said, must have entered the palace stealthily with a small child, whose cries were even now plainly audible, and who had been discovered in her excellency's private apartments, nestling in the silver crib that had been empty for twelve years.

Centarina would listen to no more explanations, and, waving off the domestics with an imperious gesture, she flew to her room.

There in the silver cradle lay a baby, white as marble, with eyes like the waves of the ocean, and who, on seeing Centarina, instantly ceased wailing, and stretched out its little arms in confiding, trustful innocence. Centarina ran to her jewel-case. It was open, and the famous pearl of the Doge had disappeared! And she understood that the Almighty had read the desire of her heart, and had granted the prayer of the old beggar woman on the church steps.

Wild with joy, she snatched up the child, dressed it in the clothes of the dear departed one, and sent for her husband, to whom she confessed all—the lucky omen, her prayer, and the miracle that had befallen her. His Excellency Giovanni Centarini replied that probably a thief had carried off the gem and forsaken the child; but his wife seemed to find so much happiness with her new treasure that he gladly adopted the little one, naming it Margherita, whose saint's day it happened to be.

When the child commenced to talk she persisted in calling herself Malgari, till at length everyone adopted that curious appellation. Malgari grew rapidly, and would have been the loveliest child in Venice but for her extreme and strange pallor. The servants of Centarina's household and the Venetian ladies who were jealous of the child's good fortune maintained that this pallor was the certain sign of a base origin: but her features were so noble, so delicate, her voice so harmonious and gentle, that such insinuations became ridiculous.

She was ever bright and happy, flitting through the palace like a ray of sunshine, while her silvery peals of laughter resounded everywhere in bird-like, merry trills. But when, perchance, she overheard a rough or unkind word, or witnessed an act of brutality, if a story of pain or poverty were told before her, if her father and mother disagreed on some trifling subject, and, above all, if a falsehood was uttered in her presence, Malgari became strangely melancholy and silent.

She was about four years old when, one summer's night, a barge floated by the palace on the canal of the Madonna dell'Orto, bearing a singer, who accompanied himself on the guitar. Malgari, who was sleeping with her mother, awoke, slipped out of bed, crept to the window, and stood there motionless, listening intently to the sweet strains until they died away in the direction of San Arloris, when she fell fainting to the ground.

On regaining consciousness in her mother's arms she begged to return to the window where she had heard those lovely strains of music.

For three days and three nights the child was a prey to a violent fever, and in her delirium insisted that some one was calling her, that she wanted to go away, that she was not a Venetian, and embracing the poor distracted Centarina, she pleaded: "Mother, take me away! Take me away!"

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Centarina then rememembered the words she had heard in her dream, and, convinced that in Venice it would be out of the question to keep Malgari deprived of music or of songs, she asked her husband to start for Syra, a small island of the Greek Archipelago, where she owned a palace hidden in a grove of olives, oleanders, and orange trees, right by the sea coast. The only inhabitants of the island were some gardeners and others in the employ of the family.

His Excellency Giovanni Centarini told her she was foolish, and that he could not leave Venice under any consideration. But his wife had her own way, as wives ever will, and started off alone with the child.

The small population of Syra suddenly received the order to give up all musical instruments and songs—even the church bells became silent; for, on the evening of Malgari's arrival, at the hour of vespers, the child had been greatly perturbed by the gentle chimes mingling with the roar of the wind and of the waves. Her illness seemed to have carried away with it her former joyous disposition. She seldom played, and laughed more seldom still; but found great comfort in the companionship of the sea, to whose mysterious and fascinating voice she would listen for hours at a time.

As she grew older a great thirst for knowledge manifested itself, and the library of the palace was a true paradise to her curious mind. There her mother found her one day, devouring a volume of Tasso, betraying her emotion in her gleaming eyes and feverish pulse. Centarina lost no time in having all the books taken down and burnt then and there, notwithstanding Malgari's distress.

Giovanni Centarini came to Syra but twice a year, and then only for a few days. At first he had been greatly annoyed by what he called his wife's folly, to which, however, he finally submitted, seeing it was useless to argue with her. Malgari suffered in secret for the estrangement between her parents, and more than once she had begged her mother to resume their former life at the Palace dell'Orto; for, being ignorant of her mysterious origin, she considered their flight from Venice as the humouring of a sick child's fancy. But Centarina had implored her with so many caresses—nay, even tears—not to insist, that the subject was dropped, and life in Syra went on as before.

Malgari was about thirteen years old when a dismissed servant revealed to her, out of spite and vengeance, in what manner she had entered the Centarina household, and how she had been brought by some thief or vagabond. Malgari shuddered, and turned whiter than a pearl, but all she could say was:

"I forgive you."

She hastened to her mother and requested, with the serious firmness of a young queen, to hear the true story in all its details. And, trembling with emotion, Centarina related the beautiful mystery, making the child's lovely pale face light up with heavenly flame, like the first timid streaks of rosy dawn.

"Yes, mother," she murmured, "I feel I am not a vagabond's daughter. I know I must be the pearl, but do not speak of it to anyone—not even to the air that will not turn me yellow—nor to the sea that will never take me back into its cold arms."

And embracing her tenderly, Malgari whispered:

"I should like to return to Venice!"

Towards evening the girl wandered along the seashore until she came to a small creek between some dark rocks, where the waters splashed gently on the fine golden sand.

Malgari's heart swelled with a powerful adoration for her friend the sea, as she stretched herself along the very edge of the water that came to caress her feet and her locks. And the waves were so warm, so tender, so soothing, that in a low, soft tone Malgari began to talk to them, evoking her primitive existence when she was a pearl, opening her heart to the dear motherly waves and begging them to give her once more the sweet, overwhelming joy that had swept over her, one night in Venice, years ago, and again another time while she had been reading the immortal story of Clorinda and Tancredo.

Softly, gently the waves answered, and in their consoling tenderness Malgari felt the magic thrill of her two joys, with the promise of a yet greater happiness to come.

Was she awake or dreaming? The sky was growing dark, but yonder, at the horizon, innumerable silvery lights were rapidly moving towards her. And presently in each one of these lights she could distinguish a human form—fair and dark haired girls swimming in the phosphorescent waters, waving their small hands, that shed a shower of sparks all about them. They did not enter the creek, but passed swiftly before Malgari's enraptured eyes, and their brightness suddenly illuminated the surrounding cliffs, the coast and the woods beyond.

As they swam by, each head turned to gaze at the girl, but not one of these apparitions approached her, until the last of the group, dropping off from her companions, turned into the creek, and stopped at a short distance from the shore.

"Who are you?" asked Malgari.

"Sea nymphs," was the answer.

"Sea nymphs! Oh! then surely you can foretell the future? Won't you tell me mine?"

The little sea nymph looked at her for a moment and said:

"You were born of poetry and of music, and of them you will die."

She had a delicate, childish face, but her eyes were beautiful, deep, and mournful.

"How lovely you are!" said Malgari. "Come and kiss me."

"I dare not. Sea nymphs must never touch the shore."

"Shall we ever meet again?"

"I belong to the sea," sadly answered the dark-haired apparition, "and you are of Heaven."

Without a word of farewell she quickly sank into the water and disappeared on the other side of the rock. Malgari returned to the palace, but did not speak of her encounter, even to her mother.

From that day she ceased to smile, and became even more gentle and more pious. She brought help and consolation to every sufferer on the island. She entered into the dwellings and into the hearts of these poor people, and dwellings as well as hearts were resplendent with her radiance. Many a time in the mild evening hours she returned to her favourite spot between the rocks, but the sea nymphs came no more.

At fifteen, Malgari's beauty and development were those of a woman, and Centarina wondered if it were not time to look out for a suitable match. Giovanni Centarini had not visited them for two years, but his letters arrived at regular intervals, when the vessel *Dei Borsari*, of the Rialto merchants, stopped at Syra on its way to Smyrna. One day, instead of the accustomed missive, came the news that a severe epidemic had broken out in Venice. Centarina was terrified at

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the thought of her husband's peril, and of her own remorse if he were to fall a victim to the plague during her absence, but her terror increased ten-fold when Malgari declared, in resolute yet gentle tones, that it was their duty to return to Venice without delay.

A fortnight later the two women entered their palace, where Giovanni Centarini had breathed his last a few hours before their arrival.

When Centarina's first outbursts of demonstrative grief had somewhat subsided, she suggested that they should leave the city where nought could detain them. Malgari, who had neither wept nor grieved outwardly, replied, that as their father and husband had died in solitude, the sin lay on their shoulders, and had to be atoned for. She had resolved, moreover, to devote herself entirely to the sick of Venice, and to set to work without delay.

The wretched people, who had been forsaken by their nearest relatives—so great was the panic—were left to suffer and die in the streets. Malgari, with her mystic beauty, gentle voice, and skilful hands, that scorned no kind of work, became the ministering angel of rich and poor, who prayed to her and blessed her, calling her La Madonna dell 'Orto.

Among the sufferers stricken by the plague was a young foreign musician, who had come from some northern clime to study his art in the land of the beautiful—a poor, noble, fair youth, whose gratitude, for Malgari's gentle care soon blossomed into a more tender feeling. But the confession that trembled on his lips never found shape in words, for Malgari, with a woman's infallible intuition, had divined his secret, and, deeming that this was not the proper time to speak of love and happiness in the midst of death and suffering, suddenly discontinued her charitable visits.

The Senate loaded her with honours—the Doge did more; he asked her to become his wife. Centarina, in spite of a hundred secret forebodings, in spite of Malgari's cold resistance, was of opinion that one could not refuse a Doge. Still, the girl did refuse him, and, out of mischief, promised to reconsider the matter if the ruler of the Republic consented to give a dowry to all the poor girls of Venice, and to provide for all the beggars. She further demanded that the "Campanile" of the Piazza San Marco be taken down, for she hated it, and if all this were done she would accept his suit.

The Doge readily complied with the first two requests, and pledged himself to fulfil the latter three years after his marriage. Malgari suffered at the thought that her refusal would deprive so many human beings of food, shelter, and happiness, but she still hesitated. Not for long, however. This new sacrifice presented itself as a duty, and as such she accepted it.

At Malgari's request, the nuptials were to be celebrated at the palace on the island of Syra, and, accordingly, the affianced couple left Venice on two of the Republic's vessels, accompanied by their parents, friends, and domestics.

One night, when all on board was still, and the full August moon was shedding its brilliant light on the trembling waters, Malgari, unable to resist the serene glory of the Mediterranean enchantress, crept noiselessly on deck, and was soon lost in admiration. How long she had been listening to the music of the beloved waves she knew not, but she suddenly looked up, and noticed a sailor, who seemed desirous of approaching her, without daring to do so.

Malgari very graciously dispelled his timidity, and soon discovered that he was no other than the foreign youth she had nursed during the plague. This unexpected encounter affected her very deeply, and as she listened to his words of gratitude, for the first time in her life a faint colour stole like a shadow across her pale face. She did not question him as to how he happened to be on the vessel in a sailor's disguise, but made him speak of his native land, and of his life there.

It was some distant country far up in the north, round which a wild sea dashed in summer, and huge blocks of ice floated in winter—a poor, desolate country made of rocks, lakes, and forests of birch trees that, in years of famine, were stripped of their bark to feed the starving people.

"It is a country poor in gold," concluded the youth, "but wealthy with the two most beautiful things on earth: music and poetry!"

Malgari started.

"What makes you say that?" she cried.

And he told her of an immortal poem that the people of this country still sing in the cold winter nights, seated round the cheerful blazing hearth, and in summer when meadows are green and the blue lakes dotted with flowers. It was a poem of love and hate, of strife and peace, of joy and sorrow.

And at last he told her the story of a grand and glorious old man, who was a poet and a king, whose tears falling into the ocean were changed into pearls.

Malgari gazed at the speaker, bathed in moonlight. She listened to the narrative with dilated eyes, clasping her hands on her throbbing heart that was ready to burst with love and anguish.

"Why," she murmured, "Oh, why have I not met you before this?"

Suddenly realising the import of her speech, she turned from him, and sat silently gazing at the waves.

But what was that? There, at the horizon, appeared the floating silvery light, and with it the heads of the sea nymphs. Malgari thought she recognised her own particular maiden in the group.

"Sing," she said to the youth, "sing me the song of the old poet."

When he had brought his instrument, an Italian violin, she concealed herself in a remote corner of the vessel, saying she did not wish to be seen if any one of the party came to look for her. And the stranger sang, putting all the ardour of a patriotic soul into the most sublime strains of music that mortal ears ever listened to. The dolphins, fascinated by his inspired tones, followed the ship. In a few moments the entire deck was crowded with sailors and officers, lords and servants, who stood round him enraptured and entranced, while he sang on without heeding them.

Suddenly becoming aware of their presence, he broke off in some confusion, and rose to pay his respects to Malgari.

She had disappeared, and all he found was her handkerchief steeped in tears. Had she thrown herself into the sea to escape becoming the wife of the Doge? This was the surmise of the dull, senseless crowd.

Poor Centarina died of a broken heart, thinking that her adopted daughter, changed into a pearl, had returned into the mysterious depths of the sea.

But we know better. If nothing was left of Malgari but a handkerchief wet with tears, we know that the pearl had been made of the tears and of the soul of a great poet—we remember the melancholy words of the little sea nymph:

"I belong to the ocean and you to Heaven."

ANTONIO FAGAZZARO.

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FOR HIS MOTHER.

HE first appeared, one cold autumnal day, on our front porch, clothed in rags, with an air of deprecating apology for living, and a wistful roll in his pale blue eyes.

"You ain't got no food to spare, 'ave you?" he remarked in insidious accents, shifting from one bare foot to the other. "Mother's a little way down the road there, and she ain't had nothin' she seemed to fancy to eat lately. But I think a little milk would tempt her. I seed a cow walkin' round here just now, and I thought if she could drink some milk and eat a little somethin', she might feel better. But mother ain't what she used to be. She ain't took much notice of things lately; she don't seem to care for nothin'. Ain't never seen her carry on so."

"Where is your mother?" I asked, interrupting the flow of his confidences. "Are you tramping—er—on foot?"

"Yes-m," he answered, with a sudden change of tone from extreme despondency to one of cheerful alacrity that was quite startling; "yes, we're walking about now, 'cos we was burnt out a little while ago. I say, ain't it pretty country about here?" he added, with the air of a man who is making a tour with every convenience and luxury, and has plenty of leisure time to devote to scenery.

"Mother used to be fond of looking at the fields and the trees and the 'ills before she went blind. I like 'em myself. But she didn't stir out much lately; she just set still in the house, and did the bit of cookin' and tidyin' up there was to be done, before she lost her sight, and after that I waited on her."

"What is your name?" I asked, interested in this strange specimen of humanity.

"My name's Jawn," he answered promptly; "Jawn Bradford. I was christened that, and have allus been called Jawn, so I s'pose it's my name. Never been called anythin' else."

"Well, John," I replied, "if you will come into the kitchen, I will give you some milk for your mother, and we will see what else we can find for her."

John followed me in a brisk but awkward shamble to the back regions, where he was soon made happy by sundry donations in the gastronomic line, which he proceeded to do up in remarkable and pathetic haste.

In fact, he was already departing when I called him back, and suggested his eating something himself before leaving.

"I'll be back here again directly," he remarked in a confidential aside. "I'll just take these things over to mother, and empty out the milk and bring you back the tin can. Yes," he continued, regarding that article with lingering affection, "a tin like this would come handy." Then in a tone of naive reflection: "I don't know as I have a tin to fetch things in, our things were mostly burnt up. Well! A good evenin' to you!" he concluded, with that sudden hilarity of tone which had amused me before, and off he went.

Would he come back, or was it the last of a passing tramp? I wondered, as I turned back to the house with a half qualm as to what Sarah would say when she discovered that one of her kitchen utensils had disappeared, permanently, no doubt.

But I was doing "Jawn" an injustice. The sun was just dipping below the horizon when he returned, bearing the tin can and wearing an expansive smile.

"Mother had a good drink of the milk," he assured me. He also informed me that he had found an old dilapidated cottage in the wood where they purposed to spend the night, and "if mother was feelin' better in the mornin'," he would come over and help me, "if I wanted a job done." To which I assented, and after seeing that he had some supper given him by Sarah, I further braved her displeasure by presenting him with the tin can for which his soul pined.

"Come in!" said a quavering old voice in response to my knock the following morning on the door of a dilapidated cottage buried in the heart of a wood not far from our house.

I entered quickly, the wind slamming the door behind me with angry violence. It was so dark inside that for a moment I could distinguish nothing but a bent form huddled over a little fire of sticks that flickered feebly on the old disused hearth.

The floor was rotten and gave under my foot as I stepped forward and greeted the old crone, who was mumbling to herself there. A sudden flame leapt up and disclosed a countenance mummified by age, and hardly human in its withered aspect. One shrivelled hand grasped a stick on which she leant, and her sightless orbs seemed to gaze at you from out of an illimitable past of suffering and privation. Why, she must have been over a hundred!

Her reply to my inquiry concerning her health was almost unintelligible, but I gathered that she was feeling "bad," though not as poorly as she had been.

Thinking that deeds, not words, would be more to the point, I looked round for something to feed the fire with, and discovered some wood in one corner which John had probably brought in overnight. I soon had a good fire for the poor old creature, who could feel the warmth but not see the cheerful blaze.

The bright flames, which now danced up the chimney, revealed the interior of the hovel in all its dilapidation. Cobwebs hung from the rafters, and a small opening in the wall, stuffed up with rags, was the only indication of a window. It had in former years been used by a keeper, but had long been left to decay.

And the central figure! Barely human—a mere animated bundle of dried skin and bone, crouching in the chimney-corner, and crooning to herself. It was appalling, and I confess to a start when the door opened suddenly to admit, not ghost or goblin, but "Jawn," who came staggering in with a huge bundle of firewood, flooding the hovel for a brief moment with sunshine.

"I've got plenty of wood, that's something" he

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exclaimed, with the delighted accents of a child that has made a discovery. "I seed you comin' across the fields, and stopped to pick up a little more. It takes a lot of wood to keep mother warm. But she's been sleepin' under the 'edges and in sheds lately, and she's got chilled inside I expect."

"I should think so!" I exclaimed faintly. "But I am afraid, John," I continued, "that you won't be able to stay here. I don't know whether you will be allowed to stop, though perhaps I could manage that. But it's so—so bad. We must find you a better lodging than this. It is all falling to pieces."

John rose from stirring the fire, with an air of slightly dampened complacency.

"It does want a little doing to," he remarked with reluctance, "and a winder in it, too. But I can make it do, if they would let us stop. Can't you get 'em to let us stop? Soon as I got mother comfortable, I could begin on it. An' I've got a few cooking things," he added, with a delightful irrelevance. "Had 'em given me round about. If I can ketch a few rabbits about here mother can have 'em for her supper. He—he—he!" and he laughed his queer laugh.

The old creature by the fire stirred at the sound, and worked her mouth round in a very suggestive manner, disclosing a single fang of a tooth in the operation which heightened her witch-like appearance.

"She knows what you're sayin'," John chuckled, jerking his thumb towards her. "She'll be worrying me about that rabbit now till I git one. If I had a trap I could set it to-night."

"I think there is one at home, John. Come over to-day and cut some wood," I remarked, not considering the legality of the matter, "and you can bring back a few things that will make you more comfortable."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Bradford, I am going to send you something I think you will relish for your tea to-night," was all I could find to say, a little later, as I took my leave of this poor remnant of humanity, storm-beaten and buffeted in life's tempest, anchored now for a brief space in a haven that most of us would shudder at and condemn.

Our acquaintance with "Jawn" ripened very quickly, and hardly a day passed that he didn't turn up to do some work. Having held a family conclave on the subject of the Bradfords, and finding that we could easily arrange for them to stay in their present quarters, which John thought a good deal of, a carpenter was sent to mend the floor, stop up the cracks, put glass in the window, and generally patch up the cottage, which only contained two rooms.

I learnt that Mrs. Bradford had refused to go into the workhouse, and that John, poor, simple John, had energetically supported this decision. They had lived somehow until three weeks before I saw them, when their cottage had caught fire. The parish refused further outdoor relief in order to force her to go into the county asylum, and they had set out on a tramp for another home.

The delight of John over these arrangements was perfectly unbounded.

"Why, we're goin' to be just like other people!" he exclaimed with unconscious pathos, when next I saw him. "I've got some shelves put up in the kitchen there, and the chiny your ma give me a-settin' on them. Mother, she went round and felt all the pans and things, and she just laffed! I ain't heard her laff for ever so long," he continued reflectively.

The winter came on quickly, and set in very severe that year. We saw John less frequently, though we heard that he was able to get enough work to keep him going. The old woman, though, from little things that escaped him when he did come, was evidently getting feebler, and as her age was getting buried in the mists of antiquity, it was not to be expected that she could live much longer. That this idea had dawned upon John we finally discovered, though no actual admission of the fact ever escaped him. To keep her alive by every means in his power, to work, beg, borrow, do everything but steal, which he never did, even in his hour of greatest need, was the one thought that possessed him.

Some intensely cold weather made it hard to get about, and we saw nothing of our *protégés* for some time. Then one night came a heavy snowstorm, and, becoming anxious as to their condition, we decided next day to brave the elements and go and see them. So, in goloshes and an Arctic outfit generally, we made our way across the fields to the little cottage.

As we neared the door, deep groans and convulsive sobs told their own tale. The feeble flicker of life had gone out with the storm, and in the darkness of the winter night the soul of the old woman had fled. We could only be glad that a great human love had sustained her to the last.

After the funeral it was proposed that John should come and live with us and work on our farm, but nothing could induce him to leave a spot so full of associations.

"I seem to see her sittin' there in front of the fire," he would say, nodding his head slowly up and down. "It don't seem to be true for her not to be there."

But the impossible had happened to the poor fellow, and when the iron of that truth had fully entered into his soul it was the laying of the axe to the root of the tree.

A perfect dismemberment of his whole being seemed to take place. He would neither eat nor sleep. Nothing would comfort him and no argument could reach him. He would sit staring into vacancy by the hour, the house uncared for and the food which the neighbours brought him left untouched.

And when he did rouse himself sufficiently to take nourishment and go about his work once more, we all saw by the look in his face that the beginning of the end had come.

So the winter wore away and the spring was upon us, and "Jawn" grew more gaunt and wretched with each succeeding day of budding tree and blossom.

And when Nature had clothed herself in all the glory of her maturity his summons came, and mother and son were together once more.

FRANCIS WALKER.

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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Chinese Scream.

The French invasion was two-fold, one-quarter of the Italian Chinese crossing into the Gulf of Lyons to Cette by towed floats, and so along the canal from Cette, across the narrow part of France, to where the canal meets the Garonne near La Reole, and then to the Gironde and the Biscay coast. This horde, with half the French horde proper, making altogether twenty millions, were to be British.

So it happened that, while the French horde proper were pouring through Belgium by Verviers, Liège, Namur, and Charleroi, pressing towards the practically unfortified northern frontier of France between Maubeuge and Rocroy, at Hirson, five million Italian Chinese had already decimated the western sea-board, and had been organised into stores-collecting and barge, raft, lighter, and tug-collecting and constructing brigades.

All behind these two invading hordes what resistance there had been was over, with the exception of some half-dozen detached strongholds, whose garrisons were gradually yielding to famine; and everywhere to the east and north of France, again with some exceptions, was the unsparing pigtail. These exceptions were Hungary, Turkey, Lapland, and Finland. For in Europe, the Mongolian invaders found some twenty-seven millions of Mongolian inhabitants already there, and it was one of the purposes of that great inventor and consummate statesman, Yen How, that these should be left alive to form (the Hungarians especially) the nucleus of a new civilisation, which was to be neither like the old western, nor like the old eastern, and like nothing in the world save something which *he*, Yen, had quite definitely mapped out in his own wide space of brain.

The western sweep of the Yellow Wave had, in fact, been slightly swelled by some hundreds of thousands of European Turks and Magyars.

Near Charleroi was made what was practically the last battle-field stand of Continental Europe. The Elysée, with rash pride, had issued a manifesto to the people of France, inviting all who could not fly to give in their names as fighters at *bureaux* established in various quarters of various cities. To this call 200,000 French youths and old men responded, and an untrained army, of which the last residues of the Reserve of the Territorial Army formed the nucleus, set forth to hurl themselves upon the infinite.

It was computed that each fighting European destroyed, one way and another, thirty yellow men. But could the arm of each, dead weary of slaughter, have destroyed three hundred, or three thousand, still the effort would have been wasted. Over the carcases of a thousand dead straggled a million living. To shoot the vagabond Atlantic with cannon is a mockery of one's self.

The garrison of Paris remained; but the occupation of the French capital, supposed to be impossible to any other army, was, though bloody in its accomplishment, not extremely difficult to this.

A corps and a half, making nearly twice the number which, in its palmiest days, had inhabited the city of light and joy, sat down along the northern valley of the Seine, their lines occupying a length from the Achères-Poissy railway-line to the Forêt de Bondy, well beyond the outer *ceinture* of fortifications composed of great strongholds such as Cormeilles, Franconville, Cotillons, Montmorency, Domon.

The first care of the besiegers was to isolate the city; and in every direction, during one night, all the lines of railway radiating from the centre were blown up along a distance of some score of yards.

Then at once with light siege train, a brigade was thrown forward, and an attack began upon St. Germain-en-Laye.

Precisely what was the thought of the French general, what his ultimate hope, in making his determined resistance is not known. But a determined resistance he did make. Such had always been the splendid desperation, the tragic pride, of France.

The Chinese, on their part, might very well have drawn lines round the entire outer *ceinture*, and waited there, till all the cats and dogs of Paris and its villages had been

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eaten; but this no longer suited their mood. The yellow man, in his senses is, indeed, afraid of cannon. But the entire race was by this time no longer in its senses; here was a people dancing mad, gorged with gore, flushed with victory, greedy of agonies. Fear they no longer knew. To celebrate for ever a jubilee of devils in a scarlet world—to raise ever higher monuments built of human corpses, and shriek and dance around them—to live, to roll, to die in red—this was their sole remaining instinct.

General Saussier, sitting at St. Cloud with his staff, received telephonic message from St. Germain:

"Chinese are being mown down by thousands, but still they come."

And half-an-hour later by telegraphic click-clack from the mighty seven-battery Fort de Marly:

"Strong assault by Chinese. No. 2 redoubt carried by gangways and scaling-ladders in teeth of guns. Loss of enemy immeasurable."

And an hour later from St. Cyr:

"Chinese now swarming over glacis. Battery in rear carried. Ammunition cannot, I fear——"

No more. So southward, and eastward spread the tale of huge carnage, of steady, rabid advance. By nightfall of the first day of siege, St. Germain, Marly, St. Cyr, Versailles, Châtillon, had fallen.

It was on the next morning, at the hour when the sun should have been seen to rise, that men were first startled by a continuance of the darkness of the night.

The secret of this phenomenon was, of course, unknown at the time. In England, presently, it was given out by the scientists that some monstrous thing had happened, probably in some region of the South Sea—some unparalleled passion of Nature—which had poured over the earth in inconceivable mass its scoriac and tufaceous particles and multiform volcanic ashes, darkening the day. That some new properties were present in the atmosphere could not be doubted; for at the same time an intolerable oppression settled upon the chest, and, perhaps by reflex action, down sank the spirits of men; the mind of the children assumed the garb of crape and sackcloth which the Mother had put on; and an awe, and a charnel horror, and a *fear*, such as the heart had never yet known, gripped it now.

In England, it may be presumed, this unutterable pall of gloom lay much less heavily upon the imagination; for here the Chinese and their reign of terror were a mere inconceivable nightmare, not a present fact. But in England, too, the universal nerve felt the strangeness, and the thrill, of that ghastly obscurity.

One lifted a club to smite a head.

It was ghastly, because it was not complete. Utter gloom would have been more tolerable. Toward noon, during all the week, the sun was not wholly hidden, but appeared as a garish blotch of leprous lavender, giving nothing that could be called light, making only the darkness visible; while, as if to vie in chromatic hideousness, the moon appeared one night for an hour as a hollow, black eye-socket, with a rim of pallid green, and then disappeared.

The sickly gloom of the daytime was just sufficiently relieved to enable near objects to be discerned by the troubled eyes, while distances were lost in unrelieved blackness.

The event at Timor, by which the entire island was destroyed, was of so extraordinary a character that positively the whole planet, with the exception of some parts of America, may be said to have been infected by the catastrophe. Nagasaki disappeared, with many of the inland towns of Japan; a tidal wave inundated a large tract of the Kimberley district of Australia; Vesuvius plumed her cones with a rufous fume of lurider red; and old Ætna, purring and stuttering her thunders, broke into strange and gruff garrulity. Over Europe, from the Mull of Oe to the Urals, there was an almost continuous, just perceptible quaking of the ground, which nowhere broke out into violence, nowhere did damage, yet was remarkable for its menacing continuity, its unparalleled universality.

Not a breath stirred the air.

If beneath such a sky, and upon such a quaking earth we could really conceive "the Chinese scream," we should then really understand the speedy delirious deaths of the few successful fugitives from Europe during that week of apocalyptic woes.

At Auxonne, in the Place d'Armes, where there stands a statue of Napoleon I., the whole remaining population assembled, on the irruption of the yellow man, almost filling the open space, and fell to their knees with clasped hands, waiting. They only knew the nearness of the Chinese, who always and everywhere, ran noiselessly, barefooted, or in soft shoes, when the sudden scream at the glimpse of the crowded victims burst upon their ears.

One of the terrors of this massacre, and of others, was the uncertainty as to which sort of death any given victim might die; one of the horrors was, that whatever death a Chinaman inflicted, he loudly imitated with his lips, in an instructive way, the nature of the death. They came pelting in their swinging run, into the *Place* at Auxonne, and as one lifted a club to smite a head, he screamed inarticulately;

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and as the club fell, he cried "Shrash!" And as another caught a flying child by the heels, he screamed inarticulately; and as he swung the frail skull against the base of the statue, he cried, "Pop!" And as another aimed his pistol at a near man, he screamed inarticulately; and as the pistol went off, he cried "Bam!" And as another seized a woman from behind by her hair, he screamed inarticulately; and as he danced and jumped upon her crushed body, he cried "Wash!"

A very large proportion of the populations of Europe had been absolutely unable to fly; many had not had time, when the Chinese were upon them; many, with infinite effort, had reached the coast to find no craft there to bear them away. Roughly speaking, about one half, calling upon the rocks and caves to cover them, remained; many, as at Auxonne, shut up in fortified towns. For a time the darkness of day and night enabled many to hide about the country; but it is doubtful if any considerable number could have owed a final escape to this means.

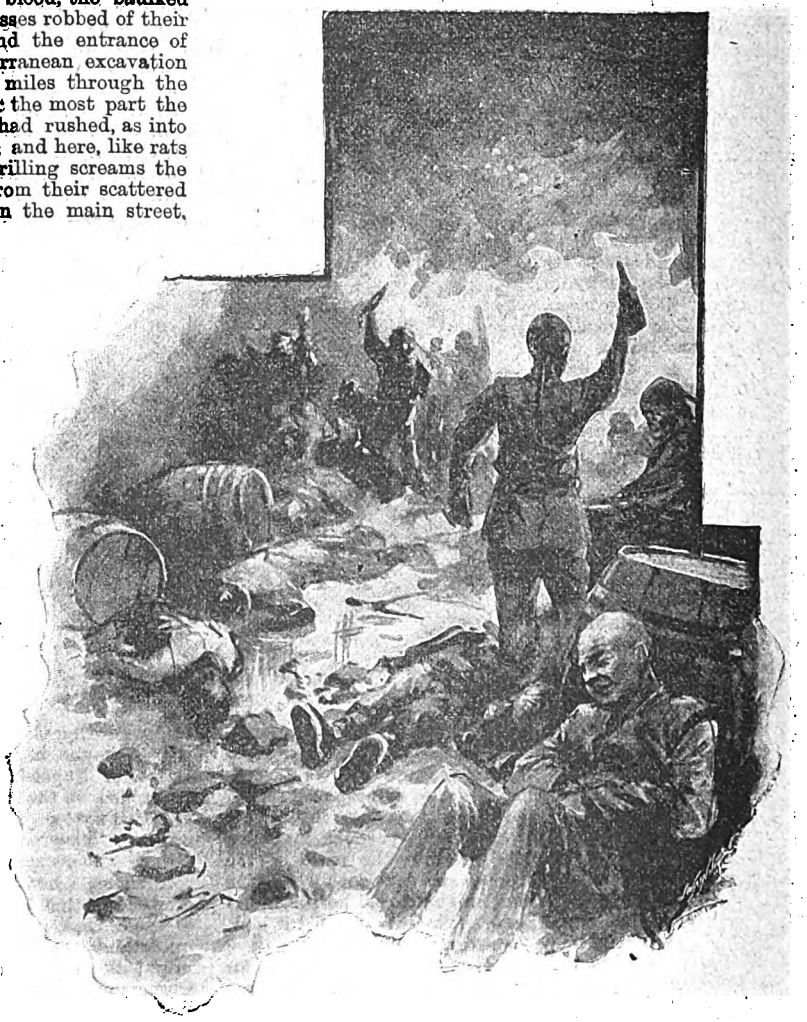
At Epernay, half a regiment having entered the town toward night—though between day and night there was small distinction now — went marauding with flaring torches into every house, searching for victims and finding few. The streets were empty—the inhabitants had vanished. In this surprising famine of blood, the baulked hordes poked furiously about, like tigresses robbed of their young. At last a party, ferreting around the entrance of M. Moët's cellars, discovered the subterranean excavation which extends in vast vaults some nine miles through the chalky rock of this region. Hither for the most part the doomed people, in unreflecting panic, had rushed, as into the last hole left on earth to cover them; and here, like rats in a trap, they were caught. With thrilling screams the Chinese, at the signal, ran swinging from their scattered search about the town, toward Moët's in the main street. It had been drizzling all the day, and their feet were dabbled to the knees with the soft clay of the neighbouring hill of Montigny, of which was made the Epernay earthenware; so that within an hour, the long ramifications of the ransacked excavations were a filth of dabbled gore and mud.

The vaults contained several millions of bottles, with from four to five thousand pipes of the best champagne; and here at this depth of forty feet below the streets, in the midst of this gloom relieved by rare lurid flares, there was transacted so red an orgy of massacre, screaming lust, and sighing drunkenness, so mixed a drama of filthy infamy and sabbatic Satanism, as earth, and perhaps hell, never saw. In the matter of crime, the yellow man is ingenious; what we cannot conceive, he can do; so that where we end he begins, his natural talent being for the grotesque and the *macabre*. And when the orgy grew still for very surfeit, when there welled from him the sigh of perfect peace, down dropped his head upon its pillow of flesh, and his snoring breath fanned the hair of the naked dead.

Simultaneously, the other wine-vaults of Epernay were invaded; and, above, too, the streets were strewn with dead and drunken. The town was burnt down before the night was over, some thousands of Chinamen perishing in the flames.

As for the Parisian corps and a half, fort after fort of the outer *ceinture* glutted their monstrous batteries with carnage, and yielded. At Meudon two gallant companies of *chasseurs à pied* flung themselves down an escarpment to hurl back an assault with scaling-ladders; they hurled back the assault, and were literally trampled under foot by the swarm of on-coming multitudes. Then it was the turn of Mont Valerien. Bouviers fell, de Buc, Bois d'Arcis. At Satory every siege-gun of the Japanese was uncarriaged, and the fort was only taken by the sheer powerlessness of the great guns any longer to keep range with their mangled rifling. Issy fell. At Châtillon the whole stock of ammunition was exhausted in slaughter. Vanves fell, Ivry fell, Montrouge fell. Nearer and nearer closed in the inevitable crowding circle. The Chinese were at St. Cloud, at Putoux, at Suresnes, and at Sèvres.

Even while the war was raging round southern forts they came screaming through the Porte de St. Cloud, and went swarming into the Bois up the Allée de Longchamp, making for the Porte Maillot which gives direct access to the city. The iron-barred gate was closed, and the foremost, pressed forward by the now disorganised mob behind, fainted and perished in the block. Still onward surged the crowd, trampling itself in frantic, blind rage into a ghastliness



An orgy of massacre and sighing drunkenness . . . as earth never saw.

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of heaped-up death, while the *gendarmerie* which lined the walls sent whistling gusts of lead through the trees upon the ever-advancing hosts. Then a stream of Chinese extricated themselves sideways, and with a half turn to the right sought to make through the trees for the fosse, and so

They hurled back the assault.

for the fortifications. And as they turned, they fell; and others following, turned and fell. And now, the whole current began to tend in the way of these pioneers. Forward they are pressed, and press, and fall; but they fall ever nearer to the fosse; and now they are falling *into* it; and down through the wide, ever-filling ditch they press, treading upon a carpet of dead flesh only; and now there is no more a fosse, but a level floor of bodies; and across this they rush, and attempt to climb, and fall; and the level floor is no more level, but slants upward to the parapet; and along this sure gangway of soft and sinking luxury, this vast snake-nest of intermixing pigtails, they press, they run; now they cannot fail; they gain the parapet; they scream; and Paris is Gomorrah.

The mystery of license to which, during all that week of black horror, the chief of the cities of men was a prey, can only be hinted here. It was well understood that Paris was to be the capital of the new Chinese world; and it was therefore with a certain feeling of old proprietorship that the Chinese entered it. They dealt with the inhabitants as a man, returning from a long journey, makes short work of an accumulation of rats in his chief cellar.

They stormed in a solid body up the wide Avenue de la Grande Armée, and also in two solid bodies, right and left, just within the fortifications. Near l'Etoile, stretching right across the breadth of the avenue, and also across the Boulevard de Berthier, there were barricades of the Garde Municipale, and street-fighting, and massacre, and mounds of trampled yellow corpses. But the flood behind swept onward the flood before with the inevitableness of the ocean-tide. Within a few hours all that length of thoroughfares which the Parisians call the "*boulevards extérieurs*" were occupied; and the inhabitants were driven inward like wild horses within a ring of prairie-fire.

Another host had entered south by the Porte d'Ivry into the 13th arrondissement, another from Montrouge by the Porte d'Orléans into the 14th; and now, swarming in their millions, they infested the ways and bye-ways of the city, its squares and its bed-rooms, its stables and its public buildings, with glad rage, with prying Bacchic stare, with gaping mouth.

Here was the New Pekin.

The bony visage of the yellow man, in moments of unbridled lust and mad excitement, is a brutal spectacle. The countenance is a travesty; the divine image becomes a mask of hellish farce. It is as though a panting skeleton played a comedy. There all is seen—the nakedness of the passions, the bare, rampant hideousness; the face becomes an indecency. What added to the frenzy of these riots was the fact that among the invaders were sweating women, crazy with heat and dust, and the instinct of blood, and the ultimate wantonness of crime.

On the night of the entry, on each of the iron railings in the wide space of the Place de la Concorde glared an impaled head. At the Invalides, in the circular pit where lies the tomb of Napoleon, there lay a compact mass of bodies reaching to the level of the railings; and on this bed of mortality lay a score of Chinese men and women in exhausted sleep.

Here, too, was subterranean massacre in catacomb and *égout*. On the Quai St. Michel a body of fifty Quartier Latin students stood waiting in proud, pale, silent patience, holding hands, and died smiling.

While the city from La Vellette to Boulogne was still one shrieking Sodom, Yen How arrived in Paris.

Though eager to be away to the coast, he had come hither to inaugurate a Ceremony, which was to be memorable. This was on the Tuesday of the sunless week.

He lost no time. He summoned to him at the Elysée captains and generals of brigades, and commanded them to make ready the people for the long-predetermined Ritual.

To-day he was no more Yen How, the General, he was Yen How, the Prophet-Priest.

He had with him the Chiam, the hereditary high priest, counting an Aaronic ancestry of a thousand years; he had with him a gorgeous retinue of bouzis; he had with him the idol of Quanheim, the Chinese Virgin, sitting among cushions in rich robes—the idol of Matsoa, who swam from a far country to China through many seas in one night—the idol of Quonin, Virgin of the North—the idol of Fe, the eagle-headed joss—the idol of Minifo—the idol of many-handed Puffa—many idols; he had with him the books of Confucius, and the books of Tansin; and he draped himself in the robes and solemn gauds of the Arch-Priest, that he might inaugurate and set up in one central Temple of the West the religion of the East.

He chose Nôtre Dame.

And the work of torture, and infamy, and slaughter, now nearly over, ceased; and on that day, the people flocked toward the Cité, and that ancient church of Christ.

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Never was assembled such a multitude within a city. To lend the last impressiveness to the ceremony, Yen How had ordained that these should be the sole public idols, for the time being, brought over from China. A Chinaman without idols is like an opium-smoker without opium. This gorgeous ritual, therefore, was in itself quite sufficient, once for all, to fix and establish Paris as the centre of the new Empire. In the earlier hours of the day messages were everywhere flashed over the Continent, and to China, stating the exact hour of the Inauguration; and at that hour, account having been taken of differences of longitude, by far the greater portion of the yellow race bowed its muttering head, prostrated itself, and turned a jaundiced eye to Heaven.

Yen How, with thick ivory ring on thumb, arrayed in a blaze of colours, was borne in open palanquin

He began to kill scientifically.

of gold all along the Rue de Rivoli and by the Pont de l'Arcole through the kneeling throng, proceeded by thousands of bouzis, bearing the majestic god Fo and the huge-bellied, broadfaced Gan.

The line of route was illuminated with the myriad variegation of lanterns, as was also the interior of Nôtre Dame. While everywhere, from Montmartre to Montrouge, a noise of jangling bells rang through the sombre air. At the hour of the sacrifice, steaming human heads were offered to Matsoa, as a variation on the usual boiled heads of the pig.

In the tiny shrines which, on three sides, surround the nave, where pricket-candlesticks and rich, religious *decor* had long represented the rather foppish religiosity of the Parisian "*dévote*," were set up the statues of grotesque and grinning josses. The Crucified gave place to Fo, and the Immaculate to Quanheim.

The studied pomp of this memorable Hegira was simply overwhelming in its effect. The prostrate multitudes groaned in inward agonies of veneration; and the God of their veneration was, in reality, Yen How.

When the sacred books were opened and solemnly presented, it was not forgotten that Confucius, who wrote them, was mysteriously *there*, in carnal presence, before their favoured eyes.

He, for his part, the little doctor—even in that grandiose hour of his triumph—smiled inwardly, as usual. In all the sun and earth there was hardly heat to melt that ice.

Only where the focussed rays of Self touched the secret spot, he warmed, and flowed, and felt.

The pageant of Inauguration was at two. By four the broken Paris-Calais railway was repaired, and Yen How with his retinue set off westward.

Already Paris presented a strange sight, apart from the heaps of dead in the streets, and the bodiless heads and arms with which the screaming Chinese played ball. She looked Chinese. The Mongolian race, like the English, can adapt itself readily. All the winding length of the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré was, in two days, bright with gauds

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and hues. Shops had been appropriated by individuals, who made haste to find pigments to daub the legend in characters which seemed to grin. Lanterns were hung out. The gay city assumed another tone of gaiety: vermilion on her houses, and vermilion in her streets.

The work of blood recommenced.

At Marseilles, the Chinese, entering by the Boulevard de la Madeleine, found a deserted city, filled with the roar of the famishing animals at the Zoological Gardens. Their only prey was the very aged, and a number of nuns, medical men and invalids, collected chiefly at the New Hospital. In their squeeze to get at these a number of Chinese were crushed to death.

At Lyons an incredible *mêlée*, made up of the madmen of the hospital of *Antiquaille*, of Chinese, and of Sœurs de la Charité, raged for an hour through the vast, straggling building. Beneath the Pont de la Mulatière there occurred a block of corpses which spread gradually upward between the banks of the Saône; and this, within two days, aided by the stifling heat of the stagnant and sunless air, resulted in a pestilence among the invaders. At once the dying men were seized with the instinct to rush northward toward Paris, the home of the gods; and it was only the promptness of Yen How, who ordered the clearage of the river, and the instant shooting of every sick Chinaman, which presented more widespread disaster.

At old Valence, where some failure of commissariat —caused by the deportation southward of provisions, and the voluntary destruction of the vineyards—had occurred, there was scarcity for a day, and food in plenty the next. The low hedge that divides the yellow man from omnivorousness was in Europe found to be very low indeed—where the flesh of men is not yellow, but pink, like the newborn mouse. At the first spur of hunger, the hedge was leapt with an easy bound.

For a day hard Scarcity; the next, flesh in plenty—roast and sodden, bake and stew.

Meanwhile, if there was a man in Europe who had a strong will neither to be eaten when dead, nor tortured alive at slow fires, nor shot with arrows, nor pierced with bullets, nor pulped with the clubs which the Chinese use for pounding rice—that man was the duellist Edrapol.

Thrice had he been caught, and thrice he had escaped.

He reached Dieppe, and for the second time within two days, he had no sooner reached his point of aim than the irruption came.

He ran at the first breathless news of the Chinese approach down to the basins; and, with the crowd of hunted men and women around him, he saw the last little boat making her way, crowded with people, out of the mouth of the outer basin.

He had forgotten, in his mad haste, both sword and pistols; and as he saw all hope cut off by way of the sea, his first instinct was to rush back, and get what was like life to him—a weapon in his hand.

Even as he ran through the street, along which men and women were rushing in wild-eyed distraction, he heard *The Scream*. It had reached Dieppe.

Edrapol stopped, and gazed crazily about. His big soft felt hat was pressed back hard on his head; the long hanging ends of his white moustache shook. It was not a moustache—it was a drapery.

Here was a stern end to an existence of pleasure; here an absence of all punctilio intruding itself upon a life which had made punctilio its bride. The Chinese slew without "seconds" or ceremony; though the aggressors, they chose their own weapons. The trifler's heart sank within him.

Round he leered, standing a moment in the third position, as if to parry the *tierce* thrust—his hat pressed hard back on his head.

The Scream came from a side street; it was very near; his inn was before him; he flew forward.

He reached the deserted house, rushed up the stairs to a room, and dropped to his knees before a portmanteau. From his arsenal of weapons he chose a six-chambered revolver and a dainty rapier. With these in his hand he felt better.

He stood and listened, his beard, his whole body, shaking.

In about a minute, the place was filled with noise, shouted gibberish, shrill laugh. Edrapol bolted his door.

But it was soon discovered, and battered in with clubs. About ten Chinese, hot, crazy, bent upon blood, rushed in upon him, screaming.

But this time they reckoned without their host. A man does not acquire a European reputation for nothing.

Edrapol put his legs into the exact pose of elegance suited to the occasion, and with the revolver in his left hand and the rapier in his right, he began to kill scientifically. Every shot entered the middle of a heart or brain, and every stroke failed not to sever the intended artery. The last pig-tail dropped upon the writhing corpses of his fellows, and Edrapol leant a little on the handle of his dripping rapier, the model of grace.

It was near sunset then, about two weeks before the dark time.

He crept from the chamber. The house was empty. He found a recess in a wine-cellar, in which he hid till three the next morning.

The house was then full of other Chinese, and the corpses of white women; but the living were as unconscious as the dead, drunk with the orgie of the day. Edrapol passed through them, and made his escape from the town eastwards and southwards.

For a week he lurked in a little empty farm-house between Dieppe and St. Valéry; and then some Chinese came to the farm-house; but Edrapol escaped.

For another week he seems to have dodged and lurked about in that neighbourhood, near the shore, in the vain hope of somehow getting away in a ship. But no ship came.

He was carrying about with him a piece of cheese which he found at the farm-house, and this, with occasional autumn hedge-fruit, appeased his hunger. He remembered the bon-bons of Moissier with regret.

Unexpectedly, one midnight, walking along the beach, he came upon a broken hut, and near it a small seamy skiff, containing half an oar. He was just able to move her; and after three hours' work, got her to the water's edge.

He put off in her, and as the water oozed in, he baled it with his voluminous hat. When he was not baling, he paddled.

His notion of reaching England in this fashion was hopeless; but the old duellist, the luxurious *boulevardier*, clung to life with the desperation of a pampered woman. And he fell upon his feet where another would have failed.

On the third morning, he was picked up, half dead, by a barque, almost in mid-channel. She was the *Conrad*, which had borne Hardy to Nagasaki; and was then, for the first time, on her way to England. So that, late that night, Edrapol's glittering fingers pulled the patriarchal tassels of his moustache on Newhaven broken wharf. And there he examined the edge of his rusted rapier.

(*To be continued.*)

For the first time in the history of British journalism a serial story of a war is running concurrently with the actual fighting.

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THE TUG-OF-WAR.

A SMART phaeton came rapidly down the avenue, and, dexterously driven, turned into one of the side streets and pulled up before a house. The sudden quiet after the pounding of the hoofs attracted the attention of a man walking, and he looked absently at the woman who was being assisted to alight, while a trim footman stood at the horses' heads.

In an instant his expression changed, and he quickened his steps, reaching the woman as the phaeton was driven off.

"Miss Reddington!"

At the sound of his voice, the woman stopped at the steps, and for the first time saw the man, whose face was alight with expectancy and eagerness.

"Mr. Crofton! What a surprise; and how delightful!" She put out both hands. "Really, this is charming; but what did you call me?"

"It was horribly formal, was it not? But it is so long ago, I was afraid! May I begin where we left off?" His voice was as persuasive as ever, she decided, and the fascination was the same, yet her tone was quizzical when she answered:

"It sounded so strange, you know! But you will come in, of course; you must!"

At the door she hesitated a moment, and then spoke to the butler who was turning away.

"I shall not see anyone this afternoon, Edmonds," and continued to Crofton:

"I am going to take you up to the library; it is much more comfortable, and you must stay the rest of the afternoon and talk over old times."

Silently the man followed her up the stairs, his mind filled with the strangeness of the meeting. Thirteen months since he had seen her, and then to run across her in this unexpected way and find her unchanged! At least, so it seemed. Women are deceitful creatures, yet in some respects transparent enough, as he had reason to know, owing to a style of convincing that dissipated any difficulty in discovering the state of their feeling towards him, which, if he had chosen to make it so, was of a kind that justified a flattering opinion of himself. Occasionally, it is true, there was a rebuff, but that only stimulated further effort that resulted in his complacently repeating to himself a certain French proverb about "the one who knows how to wait." This time he had waited in accordance with the dictates of experience, and the result was at hand. The thought pleased him.

In the library the woman stopped.

"Now we shall not be disturbed," she said, smiling. "Mrs Van Nuyster is not at home. Isn't it fine? *Voilà!*"

She dropped in a big chair and began pulling off her boa, and Crofton took her hand and gently unfastened the glove.

"I never was more surprised than to see you so unexpectedly. You are not changed!"

"To you, no! But fancy my astonishment! I did not expect to see you here."

"I? Oh, I'm stopping with my friends—my dearest friends—the Van Nuysters."

She was spreading out her fingers and closing them, a habit she had after taking off gloves, and Crofton watched her while she talked on.

"That was Mr. Van Nuyster I was driving with. I wish you had met him. He is charming!"

"Ah," Crofton said deliberately, "his wife must have great confidence in you!"

"Why not? I trust you do not think it misplaced!" She took the long pins out of her hat and flung it on a chair. "Suppose we leave the Van Nuysters alone. Accept the good the gods send you; that is, if you regard it so!"

"The 'good' meaning you, I do; but it makes me hate your host when I know what a delightful afternoon he has had, while I——"

"But here is the rest of it for you. What more can you desire?"

"I don't like leavings; I want the first."

"Oh, of course," the woman said teasingly; "you would be first in the minds, first in the souls, first in the hearts of women!

"'Woman' stands for 'women' in many cases! Well, where have you been all these months? Fancy how long ago since we met—parted, rather; yet now it seems like yesterday."

"A long yesterday as I look back upon it," he said moodily; "but now," with an almost imperceptible accent, "I shall expect compensation. How long have you been here?"

"All the winter. I love this great city, you know, and I shall stay until spring."

"You must 'love' the Van Nuysters to stay with them so long," he remarked doubtfully.

"But I do! Mrs. Van Nuyster is a dear; the sort of woman you like," she added, "and Mr. Van Nuyster—well, he is the sort of man *I* like. I hope you will come and see me often; they make my friends very welcome! You will be asked to dine, I know; I will speak to Mr. Van Nuyster about it."

Crofton stiffened himself. "Ah," he said meaningly, "Mr. Van Nuyster. I do not accept men's invitations to dine at their wives' tables."

"Naturally, but it will be the wife who will invite you. You will come?" Her voice pleaded charmingly. Crofton thought, and the moment was his. To recognise the moment and seize it was among his talents, and one is apt to do well what one enjoys. Mentally he collected his forces.

"Esther, what is Mr. Van Nuyster to you?"

"My dear friend." She was smoothing out her gloves and avoided looking at him.

"Ah, and I fancied, fool that I am, that it was I that you thought of. Heaven knows you should, to make things just."

"And your wife?" she asked softly.

"What is she to me except the bearer of my name? The thought makes me hate her. It prevents my giving it to you if you would have it. But it cannot prevent my loving you, and you only." He was leaning over her until his lips almost brushed her hair. "Esther, have you nothing to say to me?"

"I—I am astonished," she said weakly, when he broke in:

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"Dear heart, you must have known it. We cannot evade Fate or lie about it; that will not help us."

"Ah, no," she whispered.

Crofton took her hands gently. "Esther, I love you so; will you be patient with me? You could not realise, dear, how the first time I saw you, there crept into my heart a joy that was almost a pain; but when I knew, and there took possession of me a hope that has never left, for sometimes I fancied you knew and were proud of my love, though you made no sign and trusted to my honour not to speak, and I respected your confidence."

He bowed his head until it just touched her hands, and, as though the contact encouraged him, continued:

"There are women, dear, for whom a man would barter everything, fame and honour, and all he has held most precious, and you are more to me than all those, though if Fate had not brought us together to-day I should have kept away and tried to live my lonely life without you. You believe me, Esther?"

"Yes," the woman muttered.

"But having found you again, I cannot let you go. Do not tell me there are obstacles; there need be none if you love me."

The woman sprang out of her chair.

"You must not," she exclaimed. "Do not make it impossible for me to see you again. Let us be friends. Ah, think of your wife!"

"Have I not thought of her for ten long years? Can the memory ever depart, I wonder? Esther, will you take me into the warmth of your love and let us forget everyone in the world but ourselves?"

"Mr. Crofton, I want to be friends with you——"

"Friends!" he interrupted scornfully.

"Though after to-day probably you will not want to see me again; but first," she turned and faced him squarely, "I want to tell you that, with one exception, I believe nothing of what you said—that is if 'Fate' had not thrown me in your way to-day, you would have kept away. I do think that, because you simply would never have thought of me. It sounds discourteous; I am sorry, and much to blame for letting you go on as I did, but the temptation was too great. You have won a bet for your wife."

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I like your wife, Mr. Crofton, and from the bottom of my heart I pity her. You are charming to talk to, delightful always, but to marry—*ah, c'est autre chose!* She is plucky, too, one never hears a complaint or a murmur, and she philosophically takes what life offers and does not pine for the unattainable. Decidedly, she is to be admired! You may be surprised how well she knows you. That is what I mean about the wager, for one day she wagered that you would say you loved me madly. She had no feeling about it, and I was never so astonished in my life, but she said she did not mind any more—one got used to anything. Yet, poor soul, people say she loved you devotedly when you married her."

The man seemed to have lost the power of speech, the turning of the tables bade fair to crush him, and the woman went on:

"I am sorry all this happened, because I wanted to have you among my acquaintances, yet the fault is mine for I could have prevented it; instead, I encouraged you, tacitly, it is true, but encouraged you all the same. I am like all women, though you have called me unique: we like to have men's devotion and attention.

"You are simply an extreme, for if a woman be clever enough to interest you, then you are seized with a desire to make her believe she is your affinity. You say unutterable things just looking into a woman's eyes, and a pressure of your hand seems to imply life-long devotion. You are one of the most charming men I ever met, and quite the most sincere!"

A little vein about Crofton's mouth, invisible usually, was deep blue, a sign always of intense anger, and he stood confronting the woman.

"Miss Reddington————"

"Ah, that is a mistake. Evidently you have not heard. I am Mrs. Van Nuyster."

"You!"

"Yes. I was engaged at the time I knew you—over a year ago—but it was not announced till two months ago, and we were married just after. I am that creature of composite newness known as a bride!"

"You!" he repeated. "I hope your deception about your friend amused you!"

She laughed a little at the recollection.

"It was a deception—but true, too. They are my dearest friends, and you would like Mr. Van Nuyster." She went a step nearer him. "I thought you would like Mrs. Van Nuyster," she said doubtfully.

For a second the man hesitated, but genius, he recollected, was equal to occasions. "If she will let me."

"She will be delighted to. Mr. Crofton, will you understand when I say that, if I thought you meant what you had said this afternoon, I should never offer you my friendship. The combination would be impossible. But you were simply trying to—to—what shall we call it? Nothing. But don't try again, and let us be friends. Here is my hand on it."

"Thank you," said Crofton gravely. "I am truly honoured. May I kiss my friend's hand in token of fealty?" He touched it lightly with his lips. "And will you excuse me now and let me come again?"

"My friend will always be welcome, and I want you to meet my husband. You must dine with us as soon as we have a free evening. I shall send Mr. Van Nuyster to look you up. You will accept his invitation to his wife's table? Ah, that was too bad! Forgive me! Do!"

"There is nothing to forgive, and while life lasts I am in your debt."

"Between friends there is no question of debt; it is only with acquaintances one compares accounts." She touched the bell. "I shall not say good-bye, but—*au revoir!* When you dine with us, you will bring your wife." And Crofton passed beween the portieres as the maid pulled them apart.

A moment later Mr. Van Nuyster entered.

"I met someone just going out," he said.

"Yes. I am sorry you were not here before. Or, no, for that would have prevented a most artistic finale!"

"Meaning?" he asked, kissing her.

"Meaning," she mimicked, laying both hands on his shoulders, "that he thought himself madly in love and was telling me about it."

"With you?"

"Dear Van, with himself! His regard for Ego would prevent an inconvenient passion for anyone else and be his safeguard."

"But he might be able to make the woman think differently."

"Then she would be a fool."

"True; which you cannot comprehend. But you are a clever woman, Esther!"

"Thank you, dear," she said softly. "Perhaps the lesson will do him good and make life more happy for his wife," she added.

H. Ormond.

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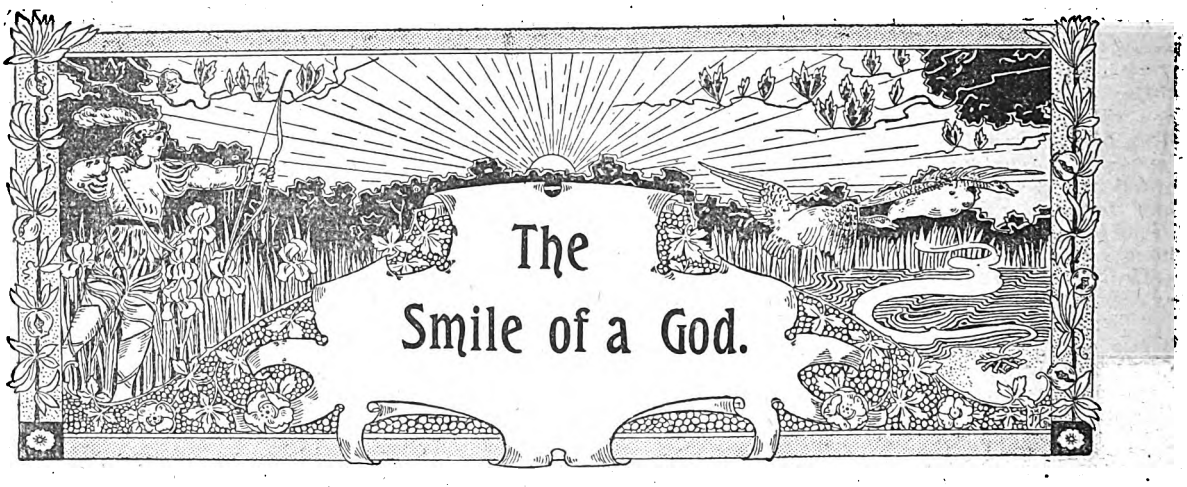

The Smile of a God.

A sensitive man has no business in the desert. He will get prodded everywhere. If he takes offence at rough banter, Heaven help him when he gets into a mining-camp. If he wears his heart upon his sleeve, let him steer clear of the Mexican towns and the pretty señoritas. If he would know any peace, let him keep away from the cattle-range, for the cow-boys' jests are as keen and cutting as the spurs at their heels.

Frank Robbins was beginning to find out some of these things. But if you gave him a whole decade he would not find them all out.

"What the boy wants is toughening," said Mart Selby.

Mart was big and tough, and he saw no good reason why anybody but a child or a woman should be tender.

"He's a young colt that wants a Mexican bit shoved into his mouth, and then be ridden through the cactus."

At Lucin's ranch the boys joked and irritated Robbins, but it did not seem to toughen him. They cared nothing for whisky that didn't scratch as it went down, and when he put water in his they called him a perfect lady and laughed loudly.

"Stand their joking," said Mart to Robbins, "and you'll get along better. They'll always make it hot for a man that don't joke back."

"Oh, I don't mind it," replied Robbins, badly overdoing his effort to look unconcerned.

It had been the same everywhere he had been in the West. He was one of those men who are never anything but tender-feet. He simply would not take men as he found them, though they were perfectly willing to take him so. And the absurd ideas that had lodgment in his head! Chief among these were, that he must have a friend—a chum—who should be a man after his own heart. He had been looking for such a man for two years. He picked him out occasionally, but he never found him to suit. This one was not truthful, that one was not temperate, and the other was not nice in his speech. There was something lacking in each one.

"What I want is a whole man," he sighed; "I never could take up with one of these half-made fellows. But it is not so easy. Even when I find a man that is temperate and intellectual, he turns out to be selfish. What would I not give for a whole man for a friend and companion—a whole man!"

He would not take up with Mart Selby, though Mart saw "the young fellow" sorely needed a friend and helper, particularly one who would toughen him. He kept on looking for his made-to-order man, but he never seemed to hit upon him. Few such men as he was looking for are to be found within a thousand miles of Lucin's. In fact, at Lucin's you would be at a loss to discover a single man who did not like to take observations of old Ashby's cloth-and-paper ceiling through the bottom of a whisky-glass, and if you heard a voice, I will give you my word of honour it was not a cherub's.

One day the boys outdid all their other little meannesses to Robbins by getting him hopelessly drunk. Of course, it was no killing matter; but he had never been drunk before, and he took it very seriously, and resolved to leave camp next day.

Mart did not like this. His heart had warmed towards "the young fellow," and he hated to see him leave the place. Finally he resolved to go with him.

They agreed between them that they would not go on the range again. They would go prospecting for gold.

And thus it was that they came to make the journey over the desert towards Dead Horse Gulch. Now, as everybody in that country knows, the wealth of the Dead Horse Gulch is great, but it is very hard to reach. Miners who have lived out the awful heat of the alkali plain that lies all around the buttes wherein the gulch makes its gash, have come back with full belts, but none of them have ever gone a second time.

In suggesting this journey, Mart Selby had a double object. First, he wanted to toughen "the young fellow," and next, he wanted to enrich them both. Mart knew that Robbins had come out West to make enough money to marry a nice girl that lived in England, and he knew, too, that "the young fellow" had found money-making very slow work.

From Lucin's to the great alkali plain that lay before the buttes in which the gold was hidden was a long and toilsome journey. But the real work only began with the crossing of the alkali desert.

White and naked lay the dead land before their aching eyes. The eye of Heaven shone down with most relentless fierceness. No breath of air was stirring, and the whole world was to them as dumb as death.

Mart had counted on the journey being a hard one, but not so hard as this. He had not dreamt that the

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water would give out so soon, nor that the horses would sink down and die as they did.

Still they staggered on, their forms, bent under their heavy burdens, standing out sharp and raw above the white earth on which their clearly defined shadows fell with inky blackness.

In that cloudless, mistless air, distance seemed set at naught, for they travelled on and on towards the buttes, and yet they seemed to grow no nearer.

It was towards evening when they reached a rocky islet in the sea of alkali, and there, after a very bad meal of hard tack, they fell asleep, Robbins dreaming of clear cold water, drawn from marble fountains in crystal goblets. The young man was the first to awake. The sun was beginning to shoot his fiery needles over the mountain. Robbins lifted his hand to rub his eyes.

"R-r-z-z-z!"

Then a tongue of flame darted towards him, and struck him on the palm of the hand.

"Oh, Heaven!" he groaned. "it's a rattlesnake, and he's bitten me!"

His voice seemed to awaken a hundred echoes, and to these responded a hundred rattles.

Selby sat up in his blanket and stared at him stupidly. As he made the movement, a rattlesnake struck him in the face, and another at his side would have done the same had he not thrown himself out of reach of its deadly fangs.

The rattles resounded on every side. The two men ran back to a stretch of sand behind the rocks, and gazed at each other wildly.

"Hold still," demanded Mart. "Let me look at your bite." He grasped the boy's hand.

"Thank Heaven, it's not in the vein!"

He seized his knife, and quickly hollowed out a piece of flesh.

"There, hold your hand down and let the blood run free, while I tie this cord round your arm." He twisted the stout cord until it cut into the arm. "Now the whisky," he gasped.

"No," said Robbins, "let me cut the poison out of your wound."

Mart held still a moment while this was done.

"Now the whisky—quick!" cried Robbins.

But Selby did not look for the bringing forth of the flask with any light of hope in his eyes.

"It is yours," he said quietly. "There is only enough for one, and barely that."

"Then it is yours, Mart."

"No—yours."

"But you are the worse bitten. Your face is already beginning to swell. Drink it."

There was anguish in the tone, as there was heroism in the words; but it was heroism of the weakly sort. He held out the bottle at arm's length, while he turned his face away.

"No, no! It's yours, boy!" came in firmer and more commanding tones from Mart Selby. "You have a mother and a sweetheart back in the old country. And I—I have nobody. There was somebody once, but there ain't nobody now—nobody at all."

In the face of this fearful temptation, Robbins felt himself weakening. He grew less strong of resolution with each tick of the watch in his pocket, heard so plainly in the desert stillness. What a coward he felt himself; but—how sweet was life!

Was there no help to be had from other sources? He could not take this. The drinking of that liquid, was the drinking of Selby's life, and that life meant much to him now. Here was the whole man!

His eyes swept the hopeless plain. He looked for the "dust" of a traveller, but he saw none, The heat of the day was growing. He thought he felt the poison pulsing through his veins.

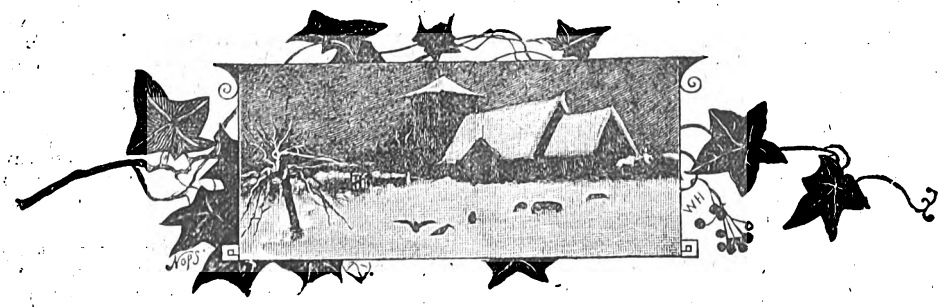
"No—no," he said, sinking down upon the sand. And there was a pitiable weakness in his voice.

Selby took the bottle from his hand. As he did so, a shade of fear arose to Robbins' face. Selby saw it and smiled. The swollen face made the smile grotesque; but, none the less, it was the smile of a god. He came forward, and knelt beside the crouching form of Robbins, who, lying on his face, with his eyes shut, begged him not to think of him, but of himself. But the tone was growing weaker.

The other said no word, but, lifting his friend's head, he uncorked the bottle and held it to his lips. A look of remonstrance came to Robbins' face, and he raised his hand to push away the bottle. Just then he glanced upwards. A buzzard was circling round in the clear blue air. He shivered, and, as the neck of the bottle was forced between his teeth, and Selby was holding back his head, how could he help swallowing? The look of remonstrance faded away as the liquor gurgled from the bottle. Soon it was all drained. The boy's head sank to the ground, and a heavy sleep laid hold upon him.

When he awoke there lay by his side the body of a man with a revolver bullet in his head.

T. A.



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A Change of Subject.

What in the world is the matter with Abbé Bernard, who is going, as usual, to the Sacred Heart Convent of Lille to initiate the prettiest girls of Flanders into the mysteries of the French language and literature?

He is wearing his shabby, everyday cassock, his nose is red, for the cold January east wind cuts his face, and his feet are frozen, for he has been walking in the snow for the last ten minutes, without even troubling himself to take the little path trodden along the streets by the first passers-by.

There is nothing extraordinary in all that; but it is certainly very extraordinary to see the good face of this worthy Abbé without its habitual smile. No, the Abbé is not smiling—a thing which has not happened for ten years; the Abbé is anxious—very anxious. He walks in the snow unconsciously, and even when he passes under the porch of the large convent, he does not reply to the "Good-morning, Monsieur l'Abbé!" of Sister Ursule, the worthy portress. There is certainly something the matter with Abbé Bernard—at least, that is the opinion of Sister Ursule, who, grumbling all the while, continues to sweep away the snow which obstructs the entrance to her domain.

If the Abbé is preoccupied, uneasy, the class of big girls is in a state of feverish agitation which the two under-governesses, Sister Madeleine and Sister Babette, can hardly control.

To-day is a great day. It is composition day. Up there, on the desk of Abbé Bernard, a large yellow envelope contains the subject of the composition, elaborated by the Superior Council and approved by the Bishop of Amiens.

All these heads, brown, blonde, and red, are in a state of excitement. What will be the subject of composition? They begin to argue about it. Will it be religious! Tall Adèle maintains that it will. Philosophic little Victoire says not; nor will it be scientific, as Mademoiselle de Saint-Roc strives to make them believe, and there is ceaseless prattling, cries and laughter.

At last the Abbé appears. They think he looks ill. Little by little silence is restored, and soon nothing is heard but the tic-tac of the old clock and the oppressed breathing of Sister Babette, who has a cold in the head.

All minds are intent, all eyes are fixed upon the yellow envelope, which the Abbé will open. But the Abbé, a little pale, although very firm, does not cut open the large yellow envelope, but fumbling in his pocket, draws forth another, a smaller one with five coats of arms.

Yes, it is certainly the arms of the Phalenpins—three martlets of gold on an azure background with the device: "God keep my race"; and in looking at these five waxen seals, he remembers all. The trot of a horse heard at midnight—the bell half pulled off—himself dressing in haste to open, believing that he was sought for some dying one, and his stupefaction on finding himself face to face with the young Marquis of Phalenpin, his well-beloved seignior, whom he had educated and instructed in heart and mind, and whom he loved with all his soul.

"Father," the Marquis said, "do you love me?"

And as he was protesting the strength of his affection ——,

"Good," replied the young man, "swear to me to do what I am going to ask you; swear, Father, for the happiness of my house depends upon it."

"The happiness of the house of the Phalenpins—good heavens!" And the Abbé swore without hesitation.

Then the Marquis, handing him the envelope which just now is puzzling his young pupils so much, said:

"You have the right, Father, to change, if it seems advisable to you, the subject of the composition which you are to give to-morrow at the Sacred Heart. Very well! Instead of the epistle of the Superior Council, read this to your pupils."

The Abbé was stupefied. "Yes," continued the Marquis, smiling at the frightened appearance of his ex-mentor, "you will read them this, and bring me the copies—I will correct them. Promise me, besides, not to break the seals until to-morrow—in front of your pupils."

Then he had departed, leaving the Abbé stunned, the envelope in his hand in the same position it occupies at this moment. But yesterday he was alone; it was night; he believed he was dreaming, whereas now the sun is shining, and he is sure that he is not dreaming, for he can hear a murmur of impatience in front. Besides, Sister Babette, noisily blowing her nose, recalls the fact he is fully awake.

Then, hesitating no longer, he breaks the five seals, and reads in a clear, firm voice:

"We, Jean-Jacques de Marquette, Marquis of Phalenpin, of Fives and of Saint-Juir, Count of Tourcoing, of Saint-Yf, of Blaisy, of Buire, Baron of Rosendaël, of Madeleine, of Stohen, etc., etc., desiring to take a wife, declare that we will divide our goods and lands with, and bestow our names and titles upon, the young and amiable girl who shall best treat the following subject."

Here the Abbé stopped a moment to take breath. He had read all that precedes without pausing, without wavering, but the effort had been very great, and he was forced to rest a moment. Moreover, his stupefaction equalled that of his pupils.

But when his eyes fell upon the title, he thought his sight was failing him; but it was really true. The title was spread out there in beautiful Gothic letters—there could be no mistake about it, and the Abbé read, or rather stammered in a choking voice:

"Simply tell what you think of love."

Sister Madeleine started up, then fell back thunderstruck.

As for Sister Babette, she blew her nose in B flat in such a distressing manner that the whole class looked at her with compassion, and the laugh which hovered on all those rosy lips died away as if frozen with fright.

The Abbé recovered his composure. After all the crime was committed. He could not now draw back. On the other hand, the Marquis being, through his great-grandfather, honorary canon to the archbishopric, took the responsibility in the matter on his own shoulders.

It was therefore in an almost firm voice that he repeated, "Simply tell what you think of love."

For a moment all was confusion. They wondered if he were serious or joking. They looked at the Abbé, who, amazed at his own audacity, appeared graver than ever.

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All had seen or heard of the Marquis, who was noted throughout the province for his peculiarities, and about whom the most extraordinary stories had been told. He was said to be handsome like his mother, who, with her beauty dazzled the whole countryside for twenty years; brave and proud like his father, who was drowned by the rise of the Escaut, while trying to save a poor wretch of a peasant.

After all, suppose it were true?

Each one sees herself marquise, and without more ado, they set to work.

Then a strange spectacle was seen. Fifty young girls—pupils of the Sacred Heart—oh, bitter irony! writing dissertations upon love under the superintendence of two sisters and an abbé.

All had read at home, in secret, novels or poems which their big brothers had forgotten to take away. All had some words here and there in the course of conversation, which their imagination, more or less weak, had turned, developed, and amplified.

All had some vague idea of this divine flower, whose seeds we carry in our hearts; a seed that, when it grows to blossom, enriches our whole existence, and gives us the strength to live in suffering, and to suffer without complaining.

They set about their work very quietly; but soon they warmed up to their task.

The five flowers of the coronet in perspective seized hold of all their imaginations and fired all their minds. And soon nothing is heard in the silence of the large hall but the tic-tac of the old clock, the feverish grating of the pens, and the respiration, more painful than ever, of Sister Babette, interrupted at regular intervals by the plaintive sighs of Sister Madeleine.

Maguelonne alone, in the midst of this restlessness, remained idle, quite ashamed of her inactivity. Maguelonne was a poor girl without father or mother; she was found when quite an infant at Phalenpin. This had been an event in the village; all the inhabitants had looked with astonishment at the little creature, richly dressed and wearing round her neck a chain of gold worth at least twenty pistoles.

"How heartless to have abandoned this sweet little creature," they said, and they talked and gossiped about it for a long time.

Finally, some kind-hearted peasants took her and brought her up.

Up to the age of twelve years she was allowed to run wild in the woods, barefooted, her hair floating in the breeze, always laughing and gay, gathering strawberries in summer and picking up dry wood in winter.

But one day the Mother Superior of the convent, having stopped by chance at the farm, saw Maguelonne, who looked so sweet and good with her clear blue eyes and long, disordered, golden hair, that, captivated by her lovely smile, she took her away with her to educate her. The pupil made rapid progress, and soon became the pride of her teachers. Her schoolmates grew jealous of her, and laughed at her; they jeered at her singular name, Maguelonne, at her shy, timid, and awkward ways.

Amid the general scratching of the pens hers alone is silent. Yet she writes better than all the others, for she has taken the prize each preceding year.

When the Abbé had commenced to read, "We, Jean-Jacques de Marquette, Marquis of Phalenpin," all her blood had rushed suddenly to her heart and she had scarcely had the strength to write her name at the top of the paper. For the Abbé had recalled to her an adventure which, though but a child, had made a deep impression on her mind.

She remembered it well. She was running about the woods in the winter, free from care and full of life, when she found, stretched across the road, a poor, old woman, unconscious, and with blood on her forehead.

It was poor old Basile, who was a little wrong in her head—all the village knew her well—and there she was alone in the centre of the wood, half dead and with nobody to help her.

As Maguelonne was crying and wringing her hands a handsome young lord appeared suddenly on horseback. He threw himself to the ground, raised the poor wounded woman, and running to a neighbouring stream, brought water in his beautiful velvet hat, revived her, and bathed her wounds.

Then he placed her on his horse, covering her with his own cloak, and all three returned to the village, where Maguelonne learnt that this handsome young lord was the Marquis of Phalenpin.

Maguelonne still sits idle, thinking only of that handsome young Marquis whose face from that time had occasionally troubled her maiden dreams.

But the old clock striking ten in a hollow tone awakens her with a start. What, already! Impossible! She has written nothing—absolutely nothing. She is in despair, but cannot help it. And thus it is that for the first time in her life Maguelonne, trembling and confused, hands in a blank paper.

* * * * *

When the young Marquis, shut up in his room, read those fifty compositions, his hair stood on end. Never, never had he believed in the possibility of such absurdities.

It was with a sigh of relief that he arrived at the last copy.

But—what! The paper was blank. It contained but one word, a name, sweet and harmonious in its simplicity—"Maguelonne." And the Marquis repeated it to himself: "Maguelonne, Maguelonne." Then, struck suddenly as by a divine inspiration, he exclaimed:

"Yes, you, you alone, poor dear ignorant one, merit my love. Your soul, no doubt, is as pure as the song of that nightingale which strikes upon and charms my ear!"

* * * * *

A fortnight afterwards Maguelonne was summoned to the convent parlour. When she entered she thought she was dreaming. Two pages, dressed in blue and gold, and carrying upon two velvet cushions a crown and keys of gold, came to meet her.

Then a handsome young lord approached, and, bending his knee, said to her:

"Maguelonne, I loved you without knowing you. I divined the beauty of your soul. Now that I see you my heart tells me that I am not deluded by a sweet dream. Will you, Maguelonne, live my life, endure my sorrows, and enjoy my pleasures? Will you bear my name, for the glory of my race and the happiness of my life?"

Maguelonne could not believe her ears. She felt her soul open to great, unknown joys, and, feeling as if she were dying—for her heart was beating violently—she burst into tears, repeating mechanically:

"Oh! my lord. My dear lord——"

A short time afterwards Jean de Marquette, heir to fiefs without number, wedded, before God and man, his dearly-loved little Maguelonne.

Guy de Saint-Mor.

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THE VENGEANCE OF THE DEAD.

I AM a doctor. Some years ago, after spending half a decade in Oriental travel and study, I returned to my home in Naples.

As soon as I was settled, I took the steamer for Portici to visit Claudia. Leaning over the rail, I mused on certain changes which had taken place during my absence. When I set off on my travels, Claudia, then a beautiful girl of eighteen, was engaged to marry my best friend, Count Scala. But very soon the startling news came to me that my unfortunate friend had lost his life, having been washed overboard while crossing from Naples to Genoa. Six months later I learnt that Claudia had married a young Neapolitan, Leone Viotti, who had been Scala's rival, and who, according to certain whisperings, was rather more to the girl's fancy. While I was thus reflecting the steamer arrived, and I made my way to the Villa Viotti.

When she caught sight of me, Claudia came running down the terrace steps with an exclamation of delighted surprise.

"What, doctor, is it really you?" she cried. "So you have returned at last! We were beginning to think you must have turned Brahmin, or that some tiger in the jungle had devoured you."

She held out her hand to me, and I pressed my lips to it.

"You have grown even more beautiful than before," I said, gazing with admiration at her lovely face and dark waving hair. "It is very evident that the sun of love shines brightly on your pathway."

"Yes, I am very happy," she said, lifting her large dark eyes to mine. "I know Count Scala was your friend, but you will not be angry with me. I never really loved the Count, and I implored him to release me, but he would not. I have sometimes thought," she continued, while an almost cruel expression came upon her face. "that the anger he aroused in my heart brought him misfortune. Had he not died, I cannot think what would have happened."

Thus talking, we walked up towards the villa.

"Look, there is my boy!" exclaimed Claudia suddenly, and a handsome little lad of three came running down the path.

We stopped and chatted with the little fellow for a few minutes, and then went on, Pepino disappearing behind a large clump of flowering plants in chase of a pretty butterfly.

The rays of the declining sun streamed across the front of the villa, bathing it in a flood of red from roof to basement. I cannot say why, but I experienced a painful presentiment, a vague fear, as though some sorrow or danger threatened me. Ah! Would to God I had fled from the spot where I was so soon to witness such a tragedy!

We entered a large paved vestibule, and then a small room opening into the conservatory.

"I understand that you do not often come to Portici," I said to my hostess, when we were comfortably seated.

"No, Leone has a sort of aversion to the villa," she replied, "so we are almost always in Rome. My husband is usually very nervous, but by the sea he is worse. He consented to come here now only on account of Pepino, whose health is always better near the sea."

Presently she rose to order some refreshment, and while she was gone, I could not help thinking of poor Scala, whose death had occurred so opportunely, and been so little mourned by her who was to have been his wife. They had been betrothed from infancy. Claudia had appeared to me to feel some affection for him, but she was only a child then, and when her woman's heart awoke, it seemed it was given to another. The Count was not blind to this, but he loved her passionately, and hoped after marriage to win back her heart. His death was very strange. Could it, I wondered, have been a voluntary one?

Claudia's return interrupted my reflections, and when she had again seated herself, she begged me with almost a child's enthusiasm, to tell her about India, "about giant trees, elephants as big as houses, fakirs with birds' nests in their eyebrows, and green gods with thirty-six arms."

I related some of my most stirring adventures, and when I had finished, I questioned her in turn. She told me how her father had died shortly after her marriage, leaving her an orphan. She had only her husband and child left to love, and her love for them filled her heart to overflowing.

She chatted on with a smile upon her lovely face, her chin resting on her hand in an attitude full of unstudied grace. I gazed at her in silent admiration, thinking to myself that the man who possessed her love must indeed be happy.

Suddenly her countenance changed, and she started up with a cry of alarm. I turned hastily. A servant was running towards us with Pepino in her arms in frightful convulsions.

"Oh, madame," she cried, "what is the matter with him? See how convulsed he is!"

I hurried to the child, who was writhing in his mother's arms, and from the bright red colour which besmeared his lips, judged he must have eaten of some poisonous fruit.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "what poison can it be?"

"Poison!" cried Claudia. "No, no; there is nothing poisonous anywhere here. Children often have these

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dreadful convulsions. But you will cure him, doctor, won't you?"

I could make no reply. The child was in a strange, and most alarming condition. While doing what I could to relieve him and watching the symptoms, I fancy I recognised the effects of a poison known only under foreign skies.

"It is impossible," I muttered. "Where could he have found that awful plant?"

I undressed the child and endeavoured to revive him by friction, but without success. Opening his small cramped fingers, I found what confirmed my worst suspicion, the crushed pulp of a vermilion-coloured fruit or flower. An exclamation of dismay broke from me.

"The serpent-flower! Alas, poor child, there is no hope for him!"

The mother uttered a cry which wrung my heart. She threw herself beside the poor little body and covered it with passionate kisses, sending up fervent prayers to Heaven to save her darling boy from death.

The father was sent for, and came in with haggard eyes, and quivering, livid lips.

"Leone, Leone!" cried Claudia, in an agony, "he is dying, our child is dying."

I was unnerved, cut to the heart by the terrible grief of the woman who was just now so happy, and by my own powerlessness.

In vain the frantic mother strove to bring her darling to consciousness; the merry laugh was silenced for ever, the little life was ended almost before it had begun.

An hour later I was walking in the garden, musing. As I strolled up and down, strange memories took possession of my mind. I seemed to see myself back again in Calcutta. I was seated under the verandah of my bungalow, writing a letter. As I indulged in this fancy the scene became more vivid. I saw myself finish the letter, place it in an envelope, drop a few strange-looking seeds, then seal it to Count Antonio Scala.

In a flash the reason of these recollections was revealed to me. The grains I had inclosed in the letter were some seeds from the serpent-flower. I remembered now that I had asked my friend to sow some of the seeds in a corner of his garden, and to inform me if the plants could be acclimatised in Italy. I was at the time studying the properties of the plant, which I thought might prove of value in medicine. But the Count had met his death shortly after the receipt of my letter, and it had remained for ever unanswered.

My musings had carried me thus far towards the solution of the mystery, when they were interrupted by a murmur of voices, and presently a group of gardeners and servants of the villa came along with spades and axes, going to destroy the accursed plant that had been the death of their beloved little Pepino.

I followed them, and soon we came to the place where it grew. I recognised it instantly. The serpent-flower is one of the strangest flowers I had ever seen. It resembles a small sheaf of serpents standing erect on their tails, and bending their heads towards a small red fruit something like a strawberry, but more velvety and flower-like. It is the flowers that resemble serpents; they swell out at the top in the shape of heads, and these heads are marked with two eyes and a sharp thorn which projects like a fang.

Before attacking the shrub, the servants, with the excitability common to Neapolitans, heaped abuse and curses upon it.

"Ah, baneful plant! A flowering devil! Viper knots!" they cried, and then they pounced upon it and endeavoured to pull it up by the roots. But it was firmly imbedded, and at first resisted all their efforts.

Suddenly a portion of the bush gave way, and the men fell back a step or two. But they came forward again and bent over the exposed roots. Then I saw a look of horror cross their faces; a terrible clamour arose among them, and dropping everything they rushed away, crossing themselves as they ran.

I hurried to the opening and looked in. Oh, the terrible, revolting, appalling sight that met my gaze! The roots, like claws, held in their grip a skull, while in a most horrible way they entwined themselves about the body. It was a skeleton with remains of hair and beard, and pieces of clothing mingling with the fibres of the plant. The hollow eyes seemed to gaze at me; they fascinated me, and my hair rose on end with horror. I seemed to hear a groan; then it rose louder and clearer and I distinctly caught the words, "Avenge me!" I stayed no longer, but turned and ran like a madman to the house.

The unhappy parents were still in the room with their dead child.

"Scala, Scala! it is Scala!" I cried, bursting in upon them. In my confusion of mind I could think of nothing else to say; I was choking with fear, frozen with horror.

Leone had risen at the sound of my voice. He gazed at me wildly, with great black rings round his eyes.

"You killed him," I went on, I had recovered from my fear, and my indignation burst forth. "I see how it was. He had my letter upon him, and it held your punishment—the terrible poison, the germ of this accusing plant. His murder is avenged; he has slain your child. But it will not end there! The crime is discovered, the alarm given: the murderer cannot deny his guilt."

My voice was harsh and menacing. I panted for breath.

The guilty man slowly shook his head.

"Deny it! Why should I deny it?" he said. "I know it is all over. Yes, I killed him. I bought my love at the price of a crime. It was so decreed by fate, but I tell you, had it been necessary, I would have strewn with corpses the path that led me to my beloved. You have never loved, you have the right to condemn me, but love will be able to absolve me."

The frankness of his confession disconcerted me, I was silent.

Claudia, wrapped in her great grief, had understood nothing. Leone drew her towards him, gazing at her with unutterable love, and kissing away the tears that blinded her beautiful eyes.

"Listen, my darling," he said, "your poor torn heart must bear another sorrow. For one moment stay your grief while I make my confession to you. Before I go away, I must have your forgiveness."

"Going away?" she exclaimed in tones of wonderment. With a quick gesture she laid her hands on his shoulders, and looked at him with a fixed and anxious gaze.

"Yes," he responded, and then he went on: "You remember, Claudia, that wretched evening when—every hope for us dead—I wandered round your home, mad with anxiety, not daring to enter. I peered into the windows of your lighted rooms, into the light at the

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open door. You were making one last effort to move Count Scala, to induce him to give you up. Oh, what torture I suffered during those few minutes!

"Suddenly you appeared in the light of the door, you descended the steps, and I clasped you, cold and trembling, in my arms.

"'All is over,' you cried. 'He refuses to release me. He is with my father, fixing the wedding-day. Farewell, I cannot live through it!' And you vanished into the red stream of light.

"An hour later the Count appeared at the door with your father. I learnt from their talk that the Count was to take a steamer immediately for Naples on business connected with the anticipated marriage. I wove the fact into the plan of my revenge.

"As he ran lightly down the path, I followed him, hiding in the shadows of the arbutus trees, and gliding along as silently as a beast of prey. Suddenly, I threw myself upon him, seizing him by the throat with one hand to prevent his uttering a cry, while with the other I plunged my dagger into his heart."

"You only acted as I would have done," cried Claudia, who had been drinking in her husband's words. "I should have killed him on the wedding night."

Leone turned upon me with a look of triumph. His wife had absolved him without a moment's hesitation, and her forgiveness satisfied him. He pressed her to his heart, and then proceeded to relate in firmer tones how, by a bold and ingenious plan of disguise, he had succeeded in getting it believed that his victim had been washed overboard from the steamer on which he had booked as a passenger. The Count's body was never recovered from the waves.

"Claudia, being liberated by Count Scala's death," he continued, "her father had no further reason for refusing her to me. She became my dear wife. The bliss of our union filled my whole soul, and drowned all remembrance of my rival.

"Nevertheless, I avoided the villa Portici, until Claudia talked of selling it because of my dislike for it, and thus forced me to come back in order to turn her from such a dangerous idea.

"Two months ago I came to the villa alone, to prepare it for our return. What strange attraction was it that led my feet towards the spot I would have shunned? Suddenly I gave a cry of alarm. There on the place of that secret, unknown grave, I saw that terrible plant, those blood-red flowers with their threatening fangs like serpents. What was it? How came it here? I seized it and tried to tear it up, but it was too firmly rooted, and I only made my fingers bleed with the thorns. Just then the gardener came up.

"'I was wishing to ask you about this bush,' he said. 'I did not like to dig it up without orders. It is a curious plant, and I set great store by it.'

"I thought I might forget the horrible plant, which fear had forced me to preserve, but its fangs had fastened themselves upon my memory, and its venom had entered my soul. I avoided the side of the park where the thing flourished, but I felt it was ever growing, becoming a shrub, a tree, a forest. I fancied I saw its threatening gestures, and heard its cries for vengeance; Ah, I knew he was waiting for us!"

Although he had begun his recital calmly, Leone was now feverishly excited. Claudia was weeping over his shoulder.

As for myself, I was deeply impressed by the man's story, and for Claudia's sake, if for no other reason, I began to regret that the crime had been discovered. As we stood there for a moment silent, many thoughts flashed through my brain, among them the disconcerting one that it was I who had been an indirect cause of all the misery I saw before me, and that it was in a way my hand that had laid the cold chill of death on the little body only a few hours ago so full of life and happiness. Then the present demands of the situation forced themselves upon me.

"How are you to escape from justice?" I cried. "The terrified gardeners have given the alarm. Is there still time for you to fly?"

Sounds were heard coming from the park. Leone listened, then shook his head.

"It is too late," he said; "but they shall not take me alive."

Claudia shrieked, and embraced her husband passionately.

"Kill me first," she moaned; "I cannot see you die."

Her beautiful hair had come unfastened, and streamed in disorder beneath Leone's lips. In the waving tresses shone a crimson flower. Leone's eyes searched the room, as if for a weapon. Suddenly they fell upon the blossom. For an instant he shivered and drew back, then, folding his beloved in a last embrace, he put his lips to the flower and ate it.

"Stop, stop!" I screamed. "It is the serpent-flower!"

"Thank you," he said; "watch over her."

Claudia, pale as death, rose quickly to her feet. She saw her husband's face grow convulsed, his lips bleed; she opened her mouth as if to shriek, and sank, without a sound, and insensible, to the floor.

Claudia never recovered from the shock of that terrible day. Her reason was gone, and six months later she died. The serpent-flower had done its work; the dead man was indeed avenged.

JUDITH GAUTIER.

WHAT DO DREAMS MEAN?

WHO has not at one time or another had some curious dream, the significance of which has perplexed him? Some dreams are caused by an overheated imagination or an impaired digestion, and others are so trivial as not to cause any grounds for a second thought being bestowed upon them.

On the other hand, there are many dreams which have an unquestionable significance. Many of them are influenced by our daily actions and thoughts, and frequently we find ourselves doing in our dreams what we would do in our daily life. These exercise our minds, and if we only knew what they portend we might be able to avoid events that afterwards come to pass. The history of the world is full of instances where dreams of a prophetic character have taken place, and the belief in them is shared by scientific and intelligent writers in every part of the world.

Occasionally a so-called dream book or two has been published pretending to give an explanation of these curious phenomena, but, as we all know, most of them are absolutely unreliable and are nothing but catchpenny publications.

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. MADAME GEORGES will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "DREAMS," c/o. *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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GREAT - WAR - COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE . . £5
Five Prizes of £1 each.

25 Prizes of Handsome Books.
25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.

In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

SO much interest is at the present moment centred in that part of the world round the unfortunate Island of Cuba, that the competition we have inaugurated, should commend itself particularly to readers of *Short Stories*.

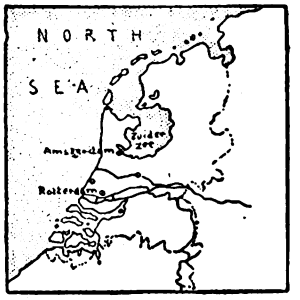
Below will be found eight pictures. Each one depicts the name of some place, or ship, or man associated with the combatants. Five sets of these pictures will be published. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep all the sets by you until we ask you to send them in.

The daily newspapers will give you the best help in discovering solutions, as most of the names depicted have already appeared in the press.

PERSON.

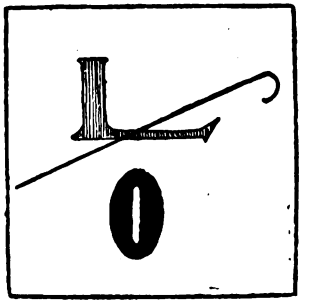
No. 17.....

WARSHIP.



No. 18.....

WAR VESSEL.



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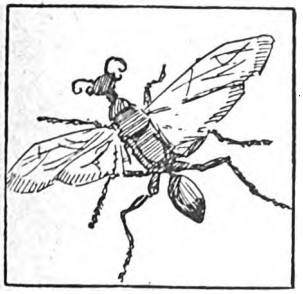
WARSHIP

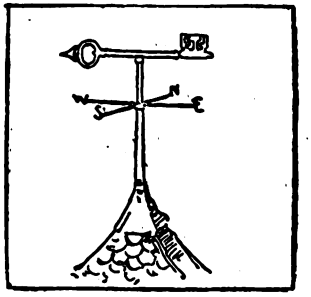


No. 20.....

PERSON.

No. 21.....

PLACE.



No. 22.....

PLACE.

No. 23.....

WAR COMPETITION.

No. 3.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

WARSHIP.

No. 24.....

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CHAPTER XXIII.

MASTER OF THE SITUATION.

MASTERING his astonishment as best he could, Philip Augustus looked round the room to see by which of the four doors the assassin could have entered.

"I came in by the same door as the poniard," said the Syrian deliberately, as if in answer to the King's unspoken question.

The stranger's voice acted on Philip as the spur does on a thorough-bred, and he drew himself up, calm and self-possessed, in his accustomed royal dignity.

"I expected you," he said, "but not so soon."

There was a tinge of mockery in the answer.

"The King could not fail to expect me, since the 'King knows *all*.'"

Philip Augustus looked with increased attention at this remarkable man, whose self-possession was only exceeded by his intelligence, and he prepared to study this inscrutable foe, so as, if possible, to turn him to his own account. It might be that he could buy this man's allegiance, and in that case he would win a valuable addition to his informal secret police. One thing was certain, and that was that the man had lost an excellent opportunity by not attacking him when his back was turned, and that might portend that the infidel was prepared to change his master. Now Philip had his trusty sword within his reach, and what dagger could avail against that?

"You do not seem to have much faith in the King's omniscience, my friend?"

"We have a proverb," answered Mahmoud-el-Reis, "which says—'Know all—know nothing'—and that means that human knowledge is blind and vain."

"And did you take the trouble to come here into my palace to tell me the proverbs of your country? It is not generally for *that*, Mahmoud-el-Reis, that the sons of Ismail insinuate themselves into the presence of kings!"

The Moslem's eye never quailed before the searching glance that met it, and he replied simply:

"I intended to kill you and I could not do it. I could have killed you and I would not do it."

"Your first statement is probably true, but you can't expect me to believe the second."

Mahmoud drew himself up into his usual attitude of calm defiance.

"Last night, at this hour, the King rode through the avenue that leads from the Porte St. Honoré to the Louvre, and he was alone with his page Albret. When the drawbridge was lowered, did the King recognise the archer who came forward to take his bridle?"

Philip Augustus opened his eyes very wide, with the air of one who has just had a difficulty explained away for him.

"It was *you*. Yes, you are speaking the truth, you might easily have killed me then."

A moment later he added, with an impulse of curiosity that he could not resist:

"Why didn't you do it?"

"Why did you not cut my throat a few minutes ago, when you thought I had come to assassinate you and that I was in your power? Because you wanted to make use of me, and you are wise, for I can do more for you than ten of your proud barons. I did not kill you, in spite of the oath I swore to my father and the Master, because I have a desire, dearer to me than all else, and only the King of France can grant it to me."

"Oh, oh!" cried Philip, "this must be something very precious! Then you've come to make a bargain with me, Sir Mahmoud?"

"Yes, it's a bargain."

"Is it anything like the one you concluded with the Caliph Salim?" asked the King with a smile.

"I related that story to the 'Friend of the King,' so that the King should hear it," said the Syrian gravely, "If not, I should have had to repeat it now, so that the King might know what Mahmond-el-Reis can do."

It must be borne in mind that Philip was strongly imbued with the spirit of adventure, and had been steeped in the romance of chivalry from his boyhood. This strange interview had a kind of charm for him, it took him back to the days he had spent in the East.

"You need not enlarge upon your prowess, friend Mahmoud, for I know it well. The English can hit a mark at five hundred feet, the Danes swim like the fish in their own seas, the Rhenish soldiers can kill a fly with a stone from their slings, and the Italian subjects of the Holy Father have a genius for secret poisoning; but you from the region of the Anti-Lebanon stand unrivalled as accomplished assassins! Every nation has its strong point. Nor is it necessary for you to tell me the hand that really guides your poniard," added the King with an involuntary expression of triumph. "It is not the noble Saladin who fights thus against a loyal friend! Your master has been bribed by that arch-coward, John of England; it is he who has paid the price of blood!"

It is certain that Philip hoped to impress the Syrian by displaying this intimate knowledge of his affairs, but Mahmoud smiled indulgently as one does on a child who is making very laudable efforts which deserve encouragement.

"If the King's unworthy servant were sleeping on the dry moss of the forest between the lair of the lion and the hole of the viper, would he blame the lion for the poisonous sting

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that caused his foot to swell and awoke him with its agony? The lion and the viper may be known by the wounds they inflict."

"And the men of the East by their long-winded metaphors!" said the King under his breath. "Now what do you want with me?" he added aloud.

"First of all, I want to know whether one must flatter and deceive you as a king, or teach you as a man who has yet much to learn?"

"Speak quietly, and with due respect, if I am to listen to you, and you think to carry away your head on your shoulders!" said the King with an angry frown.

"Ah!" replied the Moslem, in a resigned voice, "I fear we have only been losing time, as you begin to threaten me. If you will not consent to treat me on equal terms, I must prove to you that, even here in your stronghold, you are not the master!"

"Take care!" cried Philip, looking at his sword, "I am losing patience!"

"I shall have patience enough for both."

The King strode to where his sword hung, took it down, and seated himself with the bare blade across his knees. Then he began in a severe tone:

"You are here, in my power, Mahmoud-el-Reis. I do not know by what means you entered my presence; but the traitor who helped you to do so, will no longer be able to protect you. Look at me!" he continued, extending his muscular right arm towards the Moslem. "Do you think that if I were reduced to contesting my life with you that victory would fall to your side?"

"On the plain, if you were mounted on your heavy charger, and bore a stout lance in your hand, I daresay you would overpower me, but here, armed as we are, I think my scimitar would tell against your sword."

The King rose angrily, and said in a bitter tone:

"I shall not attempt such an unequal struggle, friend Mahmoud. It would not add much to the fame of Philip Augustus to cleave your head in twain! There are others whose business it is to attend to such small matters."

So saying he went to the second door, near his bed, at which two mace-bearers of his body-guard watched night and day. He drew back the curtains without taking the trouble to see what was behind them, so intent was he upon proving to the arrogant Moslem how perfectly he was protected. No sign of surprise or emotion showed itself upon the dark features before him, and he turned in a state of irritation to summon the guards, when the words died upon his lips and he staggered back in dismay.

Instead of the honest faces of his trusty guards, there grinned at him the hideous countenances of two negroes, who had been painted up to resemble Europeans, and whose dark glassy eyes were glittering with savage ferocity.

"Albret! Come hither!" cried the King hoarsely. "Hither, my pages and equerries. Come hither!"

At last Mahmoud moved and walked slowly to the door opposite the one in charge of his black slaves. He drew aside the curtain and showed the insensible forms of Albret and two of the equerries lying on the floor.

The King gave a cry of horror and grief, for he thought they were dead.

"They only sleep," said Mahmoud quietly, "but he who gave them this drug might as easily have given them a fatal one: only he will never take another life!"

He unfastened his scimitar and threw it at the feet of Philip Augustus, saying humbly:

"Now, will the King believe his servant, and hear what he has to say?"

It was a strange picture! The guards sleeping their enforced sleep; the two grotesque slaves, sword in hand, glaring at their prey, and the King gazing in stupefaction at the assassin who had just disarmed himself. Mahmoud-el-Reis was the first to speak, and there was sadness mingled with the resolution of his voice.

"Whoever fails to accomplish his oath to the Grand

The King seated himself with the bare blade across his knees.

Master, is taken, on his return, through the city at mid-day to the great forest of Khyam, where he is stripped naked and bound to a hurdle. Then all the priests, dervishes and wise men, gather round him to say the prayers for the dead. For twelve hours, and twelve times in every hour, the soldiers and fellow assassins come to strike him across the face, crying:

"'Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!'

"When the twelfth hour has sounded from the minarets of the city, the priests, the dervishes, the wise men and soldiers, the assassins and the people, all combine in one final malediction on the unhappy victim and leave him alone with the executioner.

"This man cuts twelve deep gashes across the traitor's chest, and then retires to a safe distance, knowing that the blood flowing from the wounds he has made will attract the tiger from his lair, no matter how far off he may be. The tiger is not long in coming to complete the butchery begun by human hands.

"That, O King, is the fate to which I have condemned myself, and I accept it willingly!"

Philip Augustus had taken his seat again on a high, carved, throne-like chair over which were the coat-of-arms and the crown of France, while Mahmoud remained standing at some distance from him.

Between the two fell the bright patch of light from the lamp, and all around there was comparative darkness. The King listened thoughtfully, wonderingly, to the measured tones of the Syrian, who seemed to be thinking aloud, rather than addressing himself to his hearer. He resumed his meditative soliloquy.

"I have described to you the destiny I have chosen. Now hear the one which I have forfeited by my own act."

He then repeated, in much the same words as he had used to Ingeburge, the story of his happy wooing and promised bliss with Dilah, which he had chosen in preference to riches, lands, honours or power, all of which were offered to the successful assassin of Philip Augustus.

For a moment his voice failed as he dwelt upon the joys

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"The bargain's closed!" said the King.

that had awaited him, and his eyes were clouded by a mist as he gazed into the shadows, but his tone was firm and his eye clear by the time he turned to the King, saying:

"That was to be my fate, and I will not accept it."

For a few seconds the King tried to pierce the veil which the Moslem kept so jealously over his inmost thoughts, but in vain. The face was as impassive and impenetrable as ever.

"And what price do you ask me for the renunciation of so bright a lot, and the acceptance of this tragic fate?"

"I come to ask you for that which neither the threats of kings, the prayers of the people, nor the thunders of the Church, have been able to obtain."

The King started in his chair.

"Oh! So you come from Madame Ingeburge?" he said quickly, while his face assumed an expression of suspicion and mistrust.

There was a faint tinge of contempt in the smile with which Mahmoud-el-Reis greeted this question, and his face flushed slightly as he answered:

"Oh, no! You do *not* know *all*—or if you do, God has deprived you of your reason! You love and protect her who deceives you, and abandon the one who adores you!"

"I am my own master," said Philip curtly, turning away with ill-concealed annoyance. Then, with an attempt at banter, he added:

"Madame Ingeburge chooses strange ambassadors!"

"Madame Ingeburge weeps and prays," replied the Syrian in a gentle voice, "weeps because of your cruelty and prays for you unceasingly. Five days ago I gained admission to the Abbey where you had imprisoned her. I went to assassinate her, for I had been promised the life of the King in exchange for that of the Queen. But God is great! The hand of God intercepted my hand. I saw the image of Dilah, my beloved, as that of an angel guarding the person of my intended victim, and when your soldiers entered the Abbey, I feared for her at your hands as I had done for her at those of your people, for I was her slave! Ah, you may smile," he broke off, "but we are talking of grave matters, of the destiny of Philip Augustus, King of France! I feared for her because I know she is an obstacle in your path, and such hindrances you get rid of. I would have defended the Queen against the fury of your soldiers, and I would protect her against the intrigues of your policy. If I am wrong, pardon me, and it will soon be seen whether I am right or not."

The King shrugged his shoulders and preserved a haughty silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FATE OF THE STATUE.

"I BORE her away," continued Mahmoud-el-Reis, "from the midst of that carnage in my arms—in these arms which she had had bound but a few hours before in order to protect your life from my poniard. I carried her, fainting as she was, to a sure and safe retreat, known only to myself and my dumb slaves. There, in the deep recesses of the forest, I have guarded her and listened to the sweet tones of her voice, and, if you seek the explanation of my mysterious conduct, and the clue to my seeming irresolution, which have baffled the reasonings of your subtle intellect, of which you are so proud, know, then, O King, that your pure and saintly wife has worked a miracle! I am now a Christian!"

It is hard, almost impossible in fact, for us in these days of universal toleration and widespread indifference, to form any idea of the effect produced on the mind of Philip Augustus by these words. He knew the awful gulf which then yawned between the Cross and the Crescent, he had taken part in the wars that their deadly feuds had called into existence, and which had decimated the fairest families of the West. He had seen the impassioned fanaticism with which the followers of Islam fought for their faith, and knew something of the fate that awaited an apostate at their hands. That a member of the celebrated *Fédavi*, the picked band of assassins employed by the Lord of the Mountain, should abjure his faith at the teaching of a woman, seemed so incredible to Philip Augustus that he repeated the words as if to assure himself that he had heard aright.

"You are a Christian?"

Then as the other again answered in the affirmative, he added:

"But you will not now return to your native land, where you know that terrible death awaits you? Your change of faith releases you from any further responsibility in the matter."

"I swore to return to Dilah, my beloved, and I may not break faith with her, for she too must learn this wondrous lesson, before we go to our doom together."

There was no shaking the intrepid resolution of this man, so Philip changed the subject and turned to the affairs more closely concerning himself. The night wore on and the dawn was approaching. Albret and the guards still slept their magic sleep, and not a sound was heard in the palace except the voices of the archers at their posts and the chiming of the city clocks.

When the first rays of daylight began to struggle against the fading light of the lamp, Philip Augustus and Mahmoud-el-Reis were still in deep converse. They were sitting close together and their voices were lowered, although there was none to hear them.

"There are eight of them," the Syrian was saying, "There's Herbert Melfast, Lord of Pevensey, who came to

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fetch me from my home; Maître Honoré, the Freemason, bribed by the Duke of Burgundy; Jean de Valenciennes, paid by the Count Darmartin; Steinbach of Hamburg, in the service of the Emperor Otto; the three brothers Guiscard, who are the creatures of Baldwin, Count of Flanders; and the eighth——" he stopped short.

"The eighth came from Denmark, didn't he?" asked the King.

"No, he comes from France."

"Name him!"

"Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet!"

"The Friend of the King!" added Philip sardonically, while in his own mind he repeated: "Who took Madame Agnes, alone, to the Rue de la Calandre at eleven o'clock that night."

"The bargain's closed!" said the King, rising suddenly, and giving his hand to Mahmoud. "You have the word of the King of France upon it!"

"And you have the word of Mahmoud-el-Reis."

"At midnight, in the choir of Nôtre-Dame!" said Philip.

"At midnight, I alone of the nine assassins shall be alive."

So they parted in the dim light of the early morning, and when his guards awoke, the King did not see fit to reproach them for their unwariness.

In the day that followed this momentous interview at the Louvre, Bishop Maurice de Sully was busily engaged in preparing his Cathedral for its first service of consecration. Though still far from finished, the work was that night to receive the blessing of the assembled prelates, and be the scene of the final decision of the Council.

The work was stopped in good time so that the masons might put the finishing touches to the interior arrangements under the direction of the Bishop himself. It was a red-letter day for all those who had been engaged in the great work. Each man loved the place nearly as much as did Maurice de Sully; he could put his hands on the stone he had cut or fixed in its place. They had all watched the growth and development of the great structure with the enthusiasm of artists and the devotion of Christians.

The whole of the gallery overlooking the inclosure had been wreathed and garlanded with flowers, and the good Bishop had not had the heart to refuse the masons the pleasure of hanging their own banners from the temporary roof that still covered part of the nave. The choir, which was the farthest advanced, had been provided with the proper means of lighting it; but it was no easy task to extend the illumination throughout the body of the Cathedral. It took them all the time from sunset till midnight to fix groups of candles to the capitals of the pillars, and hang festoons of light from the cornices or any other projection that lent itself to the purpose: at last, however, the task was done, and when the High Altar blazed out in its wealth of light and beauty, Bishop Maurice fell on his knees and thanked God for the fulfilment of his heart's desire. Around him knelt the men whose hands had wrought the work, and from the lips of those humble toilers rose the first solemn *Te Deum* within the walls that their labours had raised to such stately proportions.

The crowd had been gathering for hours outside, for the ceremony was to be a public one, and all who could find room were to be admitted without distinction.

Many dark rumours were afloat. Several well-known men had that day come by violent and mysterious deaths, and it was further reported that the dead body of Queen Ingeburge had been carried into the Cathedral, but that as soon as this service was over, her embalmed remains were to set out under an escort to the coast, to take ship for the kingdom of her brother Canute. Some even said they had seen the splendid coffin and the dark robed nuns watching round it in the apse of Nôtre-Dame.

Towards eleven o'clock the procession of Bishops and other ecclesiastics wended its way from the palace in the city to the Cathedral, preceded by monks and acolytes swinging censers and chanting the eighty-fourth psalm. The banner of Nôtre-Dame and those of the daughter churches were borne in the rear, and the light of countless tapers flashed on the gorgeous vestments and jewelled mitres of the learned company.

The great door at the west end was thrown open to receive them, and as they filed into their appointed places, the Cathedral choir took up the solemn chant. As soon as

A herald . . . proclaimed . . . "His Majesty, the KING!"

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the members of the Council were seated, the Freemasons ranged themselves on the left of the nave, and then the crowd was free to enter. As they rushed to their places, cries of wonder and admiration were heard on all sides, regardless of the stern looks which some of the ecclesiastics cast at the simple-minded folk.

An open space in front of the altar had been left for the King and his attendants, and special places had been reserved for the great vassals of the crown. The Freemasons were all wearing the dress of their order, and each man bore his blunted lance wreathed with ribbons. When the popular excitement had partly died away, all eyes were turned to the south door through which the King and his suite were to enter, and over which was situated the workshop of the mysterious sculptor Jean Cador.

One side of the shed had been removed, and a strange sight was visible. It was a study in black and white, with a strong light thrown upon it, the figures of two black men, one on either side of a statue veiled in purest white. In point of mobility the living men lost nothing by comparison with the lifeless marble.

Everyone knew that this was the famous statue which Jean Cador had been commissioned to carve—but when was it to be unveiled? And when were those two motionless figures to show some sign of life? All the other beauties of Nôtre-Dame had now been revealed to the eyes of the multitude, and with the perversity of human nature that one veiled block of marble possessed far more charm for the majority than all the treasures that were displayed around them.

In the ranks of the Freemasons they were whispering.

"We are all here but Jean de Valenciennes and Maître Honoré our brother."

"And Jean Cador," put in another voice.

"Oh, he has never been near us since the day he was admitted," said an old mason.

Eric came in with his sister at this moment and heard the remarks his comrades were making.

"Neither Jean de Valenciennes nor Maître Honoré will be with you to night," he said, "for Jean was found with his skull cleft by a sword in his own house, and Maître Honoré was stabbed in the apartments of Herbert Melfast, Lord of Pevensey."

"Woe to that false Saxon!" muttered several voices.

"He has nothing to fear from you," continued Eric, "for the same blade that dispatched our comrade, pierced his false heart."

A dread silence fell on those who heard this tale of summary slaughter. Death seemed stalking unresisted through their midst.

A later arrival brought news that in the middle of the Great Bridge, under the lamp that hung before the shrine of the Virgin, had been found the three corpses of the brothers Guiscard; and at the very door of Nôtre-Dame, a German, named Steinbach of Hamburg, had been struck down by an invisible foe. He had uttered one cry and his blood had welled out on the pavement, at the foot of the steps.

"Room! Room!" cried the heralds from time to time, as one important personage after another arrived and was duly announced.

All the great barons, including my lord of Burgundy and cheery Jean de Nesle were there in all their splendour.

At last a wider passage was cleared in the centre of the nave and a herald, clothed in scarlet, embroidered with the Fleur-de-lis of France, proclaimed, as he flung open the south door:

"His Majesty, the KING!"

All heads were turned, necks were craned and men and women rose on tip-toe to see the arrival of Philip Augustus and Madame Agnes in their royal robes. But there was disappointment in store for them. The King came alone, attended only by his page Albret, and he wore the battered, tarnished armour that had seen him through his worst wars. A few paces behind him came his body guard, under the command of Jean Belin, who led his men to the space cleared for them.

Albret turned to look at Eve as he entered. She was pale and sad. Her eyes bore traces of frequent tears and her dress was all black. She had at last given up hope and donned mourning for her royal foster-sister. She answered his gaze with a tender little smile, but her heart was too full of sorrow for her personal affairs to have much interest at that moment.

"Where is the Queen?" was the question that rose to all lips.

The King knelt for a few minutes before the altar, after which he rose and faced the Council who were sitting in a semi-circle within the choir.

"My most reverend Fathers in God," he said, "whatever decision you may have come to, is now immaterial.

"Your assembly has become purposeless, and I give you my royal permission to dissolve the Council."

"Philip of France," cried the legate, pale with indignation, "you did not call us together and you are powerless to disband the Council convened by his Holiness!"

The King raised his mail-covered right hand to Heaven, and said:

"God works his will without our aid, most reverend Fathers. Your consultations are no longer to the purpose, seeing that the King of France has now but *one wife*."

A prolonged murmur ran through the ranks of the ecclesiastics, and a cry of horror rang through the assembled multitude, for these words confirmed the worst suspicions of most of those present.

Some of the bolder spirits ventured to say:

"The King had two wives, one he hated and the other he loved. It's the one he hated who's dead, of course!"

"Here comes the one he loves!" cried several near the door. And in truth there was Madame Agnes arrayed in her royal robes and wearing the crown of a Queen Consort, descending from her gilded litter with the assistance of Amaury Montruel.

As she was about to set foot inside the Cathedral, the gruff voice of Captain Antoine Cadocu, cried out: "Halt, there!" and while two halberds barred her entrance to the building her companion was pushed quickly inside. The prelates were holding a whispered consultation, and King Philip Augustus watched the little scene enacted with such rapidity before the door without making any sign of favour or disapproval. It was as if he had not known the people concerned in it.

When Montruel had recovered from the sudden shock, he prepared to advance to the King's side, but as he passed under the shed containing the statue, an instantaneous gleam of intelligence was seen in the eyes of the negroes. There was an imperceptible movement somewhere, the statue tottered on its base, and then reeled heavily forward, descending with a terrific crash upon the treacherous "Friend of the King." In the very way that he had bartered for his master to end his days, he fell himself—crushed and mangled under the image of the woman whose undoing he had sought so eagerly.

(To be concluded.)

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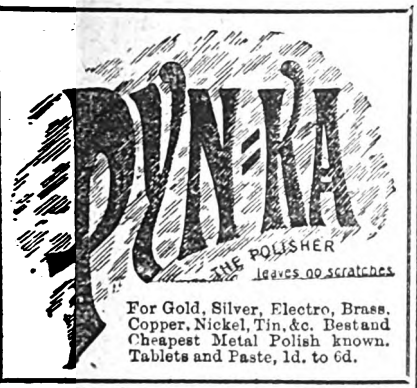

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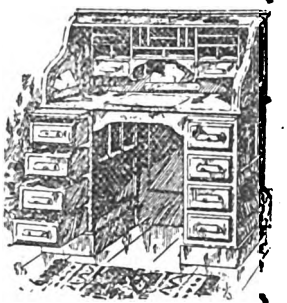

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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

WITH this number of *Short Stories* is presented a supplement dealing with the FRESH AIR FUND. I should consider it a great favour on the part of my readers if they would do their best to get together a few subscriptions for this charity. *Short Stories* has always done its part well during the existence of the FRESH AIR FUND, and I feel sure that its readers will not go back on their past performances. Ninepence, as perhaps you are already aware, covers the total expenses—railway, food and drink—of one little ragged child for a whole summer's day.

R. H. W.—A wind from the south-west gives the steadiest and most continuous rain; the west to north-west the heaviest, but the latter is an intermittent downpour. More rain has been known to fall in fifteen minutes with the wind veering from west to north-west than has fallen during a day during a similar storm with the wind in the south-west.

ABSTAINER writes to ask whether the consumption of beer, tobacco or tea increases fastest in this country.——The consumption of tea has increased most during the last ten years; tobacco comes next, and beer comes third.

W. K.—Henry VIII. was the first of the Kings of England to insist upon being addressed as "Your Majesty." Before that time, the sovereign was addressed as "Your Highness," "Your Grace," or "Your excellent Grace."

CABBY.—Yes, it is quite true. If you had lived two or three centuries ago, you would probably have had to choose some other way of making a living, for in the year 1635 a royal decree was issued to the effect that no hackney coaches were to be "used or suffered" in London or Westminster, unless they were to travel three miles out of town, and it was further provided that no one should go in a coach in the streets unless the owner of the coach constantly maintained four able horses for the Royal service when required.

D. D.—You may be surprised to hear that if the Queen were to call all the policemen of England with their officers to a review, an army of nearly 40,000 men would have to pass before her.

I. I. I. wants to know if blindness is more prevalent among women than among men.——No; quite the contrary. Blind men outnumber blind women two to one.

R. E.—Earthenware sleepers are in use on some of the Japanese Railways.

NOVA-SCOTIA.—The number of men estimated as being employed in the world's navies, is 1,693,000.

A NOTTINGHAM reader, signing himself "Shoreham," writes: "I send you herewith a cutting from the Nottingham *Evening Post*, of Tuesday last, and I think you will admit it is sufficiently startling when taking into consideration the possibilities evolved by Mr. M. P. Shiel in his most excellent story, 'The Empress of the Earth.' Evidently something is going to happen in that part of the globe, and it is apt to make one wonder whether Yen How is simply a creation of the novelist's brain or an actual possibility and fact." The newspaper cutting reads as follows: "According to a North China paper, the people inhabiting the Yangtse Valley have recently begun to quietly arm themselves, and they are being gradually supplied with firearms though various influential quarters. Something is evidently expected to happen in the near future, and the leaders of public opinion amongst the masses are apparently trying to prepare the minds of the latter for some crisis."

"THE Empress of the Earth," has, it appears, aroused the interest of our readers in all things Chinese. Several readers have written to ask why the term "Celestials" is applied to the natives of China.——This appellation is probably the outcome of the Chinese custom of speaking of the reigning dynasty as *Tien-chao*, or "Heavenly Dynasty." The designation is no doubt based on the claim of the founder of each successive dynasty to have received the command of Heaven to punish and supersede a line of wicked rulers, he and his successors therefore becoming *Tien-su*, or, "sons of Heaven."

H. V., another admirer of Mr. Shiel's story, asks: "What is the circumference of the walls of Pekin, and how many gates are there?"——The outer great wall of Pekin is twenty-seven miles in circumference. There are thirteen gates, but though finely arched, they are insignificant, being only twenty feet high. At night they are closed with great doors sheathed with iron, and no one can pass in or out.

C. C.—The umbrella was described in early dictionaries as a "portable penthouse to be carried in a person's hand to screen him from violent rain or heat." John Macdonald, writing about the year 1778, says that he had a fine silk umbrella which he had brought from Spain; but when he went out with it, people called him a Frenchman and asked him why he did not hire a coach. The drivers of hackney coaches were much annoyed, believing that the introduction of the umbrella would seriously affect their trade.

COTTON MILL.—The finest cotton in the world comes from Egypt; the only kind that can compete with it is the Sea Island (America) production, which is limited in quantity. Indian cotton is poorer in quality and has only one-eighth the yield per acre of Egyptian cotton. Jumel, a Frenchman, conceived the idea of cultivating cotton in the land of the Pharaohs in 1820, and astute Mehemet Ali saw the value of it and favoured the project.

EQUINE.—A blind horse will gallop round a field without knocking against the surrounding fence. The sense of smell informs the animal of its proximity.

KATIE asks: "Who was 'Peter the Wild Boy'?"——He was a savage creature found in the Harzwald, in the Electorate of Hanover, when George I. and his friends were hunting. He was walking on his hands and feet climbing trees like a squirrel, and eating grass and moss. That was in 1725, and he was supposed to be thirteen years old. He was brought to this country and lived for a number of years, but no change could be effected in his habits.

CHARLES G. writes: "My sister and I have been having a discussion on the subject of biting off the ends of thread or silk instead of using the scissors. I contend, among other things, that it is likely to be dangerous from a hygienic point of view; she replies that I am too fussy about health. What is your opinion?"——That the weight of evidence appears to be on your side. It has recently been discovered in France that lead poisoning has resulted from biting off the ends of silk. Investigation revealed that advantage is taken of the dyeing process to add lead salts, which the thread partly absorbs. That makes it heavier, which means so much extra profit, because silk thread is sold by weight.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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75in. by 96in.	9lb.	13s. 0s.	37s.
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2	9 0 by 7 6		7/0	11/9
3	9 0 by 9 0		8/6	13/6
4	10 6 by 7 6		8/9	13/9
5	10 6 by 9 0		10/0	15/6
6	12 0 by 9 0		11/6	18/0

Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12 0 by 10 6		13/6	20/6
8	13 6 by 10 6		15/3	24/0
9	12 0 by 12 0		15/3	24/0
10	13 6 by 12 0		17/0	27/0
11	15 0 by 12 0		19/0	32/0
12	18 0 by 12 0		22/9	36/0

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(A for the Aches **BEECHAM'S PILLS** can dismiss.)

B is for **BATHING,** of all fun the king,
(B for the Bloom **BEECHAM'S PILLS** always bring.)

C is for **COACHING,** o'er mountains afar.
(C for Convenient, **BEECHAM'S PILLS** ever are.)

D is for **DANCING,** by bright 'lectric light.
(D for Dyspepsia **BEECHAM'S PILLS** soon put right.)

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(E for Expedient **BEECHAM'S PILLS** you will find.)

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(F for the Faintings that **BEECHAM'S PILLS** banish.)

G is for **GOLFING,** on earth the best game.
(G for the Guinea of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** fame.)

H is for **HAPPINESS,** health will ensure.
(H for the Headache **BEECHAM'S PILLS** always cure.)

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(I for Insomnia, **BEECHAM'S PILLS** can combat.)

J is for **JOURNEYS** by sea, lake, and land.
(J for the Joy **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will command.)

K is for **KISSES**—a few on the sly.
(K is for Keep **BEECHAM'S PILLS** always by.)

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(L is for Languor, **BEECHAM'S PILLS** can send flying.)

M is for **MUSIC,** each day on the pier.
(M is for Matron who holds **BEECHAM'S PILLS** dear.)

N is for **NOVELS,** to read at your ease.
(N for the Nightmare **BEECHAM'S PILLS** can appease.)

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(O for Obstructions **BEECHAM'S PILLS** clear away.)

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(P stands for Pills, **BEECHAM'S PILLS** are the best.)

Q for **QUEEN'S WEATHER,** that all may go well.
(Q for the Qualmishness **BEECHAM'S PILLS** quell.)

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(T for the Trembling **BEECHAM'S PILLS** always cure.)

U is for **UNDER THE AWNING,** at night.
(U for Unfitness **BEECHAM'S PILLS** soon put right.)

V is for **VALLEYS** and wide wealth of view.
(V for the Vertigo **BEECHAM'S PILLS** soon subdue.)

W for **WHEELING,** which thousands love well.
(W for Weariness **BEECHAM'S PILLS** dispel.)

X is for **'XTRAS** you find in your bill.
(X stands for 'Xcellent **BEECHAM'S PILLS** still.)

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(Y for the Youth **BEECHAM'S PILLS** quickly yield.)

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(Z for the Zest **BEECHAM'S PILLS** ever bring.)

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BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 492. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 4TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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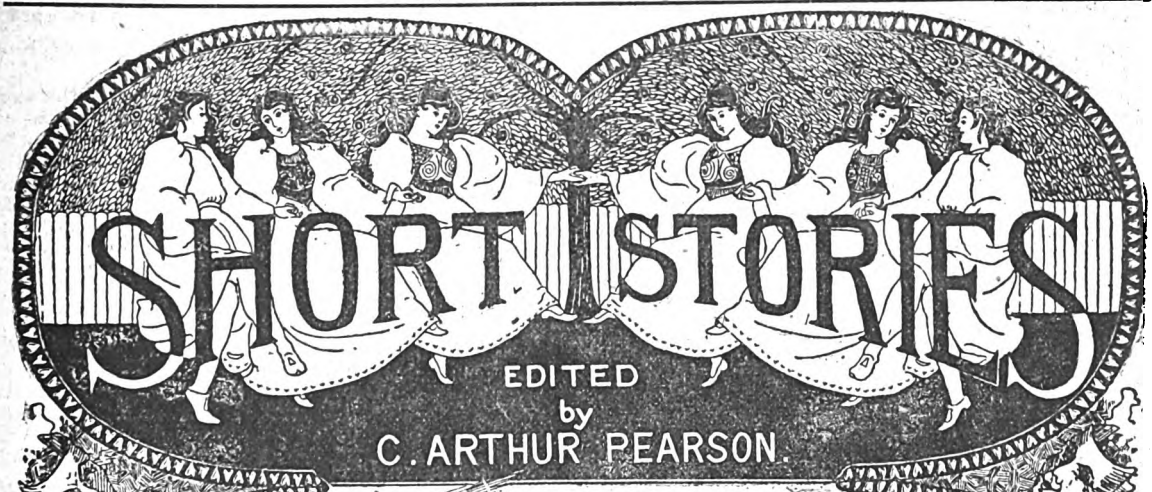

No. 492.] [ONE PENNY.
For the Week ending June 4th, 1898.

A NIGHT'S SERVICE.

AFTER Sir Lucius had won my horse and my sword there was naught left me to send after them, so I sat playing with my dice box and studying the black shadow of the table on the floor and the carved legs of my companion's chair; I did not care to look him in the face.

I heard the click of the bottle against the glass as he filled another bumper, and the rustle of his garments as he settled back in his chair; then, after an instant's dead stillness, in which I knew he was watching me, he spoke out gently:

"No need to be down-hearted, Wat."

"Not for you," I replied rather savagely.

"Come, come, take it not so seriously," he answered with a kindness that, added to the Spanish wine that had gone to my head and the hopeless feeling of desolation that was griping at my heart, made me forget for the moment to distrust him. "You've those tough young sinews of yours still left."

"Yes; I might turn ditcher for my living," I retorted.

"No, no; you misread my meaning. You've still the strength in your body left to set against my goods."

I glanced up quickly, but he was snuffing the candle just then, so only shadows fell on his face and I could not read his look.

"Say, now," he went on, "we throw once more; I stake the horse and sword I had of you; you stake twelve hours' service with them for to-morrow night—no, for to-night," he corrected, as he pointed to the window, where through the stripped branches of the trees that pressed close to Adlingstead we could see the dun eastern sky with a grey slit across it.

"All one to me," I replied. I threw and lost, just as I had lost during all that sitting. Then I pushed back my chair and left the room, shutting the door quickly, so I might not hear Sir Lucius' courteous, "Till to-night then."

* * * * *

There was distant kinship betwixt Sir Lucius Ingram and myself, sufficient to enable me to accept of a plate at his table and a bed under his roof, now that the failure of His Majesty's plans had left me a lieutenant with neither company or hire, yet not sufficient to make him yield such hospitality generously.

Hardly a friendly word had I had of him, save when we were at dice, the whole three days I had spent at Adlingstead, so it made me more uneasy to find him so civil the afternoon succeeding the game just referred to, and I began to fear he had some serious service to ask of me.

It was a relief when, towards mid-afternoon, he bade me follow him out through the western door into the

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lower end of the garden and so, by the postern gate, into the lane, where stood my horse, the Don. At the sight of him I knew we should soon come to business.

Sure enough, Sir Lucius spoke out at once:

"You know the way to Frith?"

"Old Henry Mayeson's estate?" I queried. "Surely." And in the relief in discovering the service was not likely to be a midnight assassination, which, as I knew Sir Lucius' temper, I had rather feared. I turned to the Don and began rubbing his black nose. The old fellow pressed his nose against the front of my jacket and whinnied softly, till my heart smote me that I could have thrown him away, and to Sir Lucius, of all men.

"Then perchance," went on Sir Lucius, with his cold eyes on my face, "you may have heard of Sir Henry Mayeson's heiress, Mistress Cordelia Mayeson?"

"Why," I blurted out, "that is the gentlewoman whom you——" I had the wit to bite down on my tongue there. 'Tis poor policy to remind a rejected suitor of his failure.

"Exactly," replied Sir Lucius, with a flicker of a smile on his thin lips. "And she is the gentlewoman you must make shift to bring hither to-night."

I ripped out an oath at that, but he held up one hand and went on as if I had not spoken.

"Ride at once to Frith. Tell Mistress Mayeson that Master Fulford, her guardian, lieth ill at Stowbury—so he doth, of the gout—you shall say 'tis a fever, or what you will. Only see that with her ready and dutiful affection my mistress doth dispatch at once to his side, under your escort, my honest-faced gentleman. And you shall lose your way and stray hither."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," I choked out. I think I should have knocked him down, only he was such a puny little wretch I was loath to strike him. "Why, 'tis infamous!"

Sir Lucius waited till I had done storming, then said:

"'Tis no great harm the wench will suffer in being wedded to a man of her own rank. And I entertain an affection for her. For her estate, too, you would say, Master Wat? Well, well, her lands detract nothing from her personal charms; but, be that as it may, 'tis my purpose to make her my wife, and, with your aid, I shall bring it to pass ere the week is out."

I fumbled at the Don's reins a moment, then muttered:

"But if she does not incline thereto, I want no hand in the matter."

"You passed your word," said Sir Lucius coldly. "I have ever held you a gentleman of honour, Walter Staplegate."

"If you call me otherwise," I retorted, with my hand on my hilt.

"Ah! The sword you wear on suffrance;" he replied. "Never mind, Wattie, bring the girl hither this even', and you shall have your cutting tool and your evil-tempered horse, all in free gift."

Then he turned his back in dismissal, and swinging into my saddle I rode away down the lane.

I went slowly at first, for I had no great liking for an errand such as this, but after I got out into the road to Frith and the Don fell into his good, smooth trot, I got to looking at it in a pleasanter light; for, after all, Sir Lucius would but marry a foolish girl, who, like enough, knew not her own mind. And then, too, I should win back my old Don by the practice. So putting Mistress Cordelia Mayeson quite out of my head, I rode forward happily, with the wind in my face and the sun low on my left hand, so that a long, black shadow trotted at my side.

Shadows had all blended in the dull grey of the early twilight when I drew rein in the courtyard of the old manor house at Frith. I gave a sleek serving man the message Sir Lucius had given me—'twas no lie of mine—then dismounted and paced up and down the flagged walk by the side of the house to stretch my legs. I was just beginning to make friends with a great hound who was loitering there when a girl came running along the walk towards me, a slip of a lass in a grey riding cloak, whom I judged to be Mistress Mayeson.

"Tell me, is it a mortal illness?" she cried.

I had to bethink an instant ere I could recollect who was ill, but she ran on without heeding me.

"And he sent you? Did you speak with him? He wishes to see me? Oh, why doth not Jock hasten with the horses! Poor Master Fulford!"

Then she seemed to put an inward control on herself, for she bit her lips, that trembled never so little, and stood tearing at her gloves a moment and adjusting the fastening of her cloak, ere she lifted her eyes to my face. Her voice was quite calm when she spoke again.

"You are his messenger? I never yet met you, sir."

Happily at that moment up came Jock with her horse and one that bore a man's saddle.

The clumsy fool would have assisted her, but I pushed him aside, and put her into her saddle, all spring and alertness she was, like a squirrel. Scarce seated she was out of the court on the canter, and master Jock and I plodded after her.

It was while we rode thus knee to knee I turned on him, and showing him my pistol by way of argument, bade him ride back whence he came.

"And tell the people at the house," I added, for I had no wish to go sneaking away like a thief, "that I am running away with their mistress."

He scuttled for home as fast as his fat cob would carry him, and I rode on after my young lady. It seemed just as well to keep in her rear and not risk being questioned till we reached the fork where the cross road to Adlingstead branches off from the Stowbury road; but there I came up with her, and clapping one hand on her bridle, turned her steed into the cross road.

Her head was thrown back at once and she gazed up at me, half amazed, half indignant, with a blank:

"What mean you, sir?"

"We are going to Adlingstead," I replied, looking at her head.

I had meant to tell her the truth and have done with it, but I did not want to see her cry.

"This hath all been a trick and we are now bound for Sir Lucius Ingram's house. You are going to marry him."

"Indeed?" she queried.

I could feel the scorn that bit each syllable, but I did not meet her eyes.

Next moment she brought her whip down on her horse's flank and made an effort to dash by me into the Stowbury road.

I caught her rein, and on the instant the whip came slash across my face, three stinging cuts that I, with one hand on her bridle, the other steadying the Don, could not ward off; not till we were pacing along the Adlingstead road could I get an arm free and mop the blood from my face.

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"That was cowardly done," I burst out involuntarily, still tingling with the shame of such punishment.

"Verily, you have the right to look for generous treatment at the hands of everyone," Mistress Mayeson replied, with an accent that cut worse than her whip lash. She had turned her head and was gazing at me as we rode, but I kept my eyes on the Don's ears, and only retorted sullenly in what poor defence I had at hand:

"Say that to Sir Lucius; I like not this task myself; I do it, but at his command."

"You are Sir Lucius' bondman, then?" she went on. "Prithee, tell me, do you clean his boots, and groom his horses, too?"

"I am as good a gentleman as Sir Lucius," I said sullenly. I had been ready to bear with her crying and be very patient, and good-tempered, but I had not looked for a gentlewoman to rail at me in this unseemly fashion.

"No better?" she asked. "Then you must be the basest of the base."

"I would you were a man!"

I swung round in my saddle and faced her then; I could not make out her features in the twilight, but I could feel her eyes upon me.

"Nay; do not wish that," she said, with a little dry laugh. "If I were, you know well you never durst touch me."

"You mistake, Mistress," I retorted, trying to meet coolness with coolness. "I would seek a meeting with all the swordsmen you can send against me. Indeed, I bade your groom rouse your people to pursue. We shall have good fighting ere the night be over."

"I thank you for your courtesy," she said quietly, and then we went on in silence for a time.

The hunters' moon came up on our left, and the sheen of its clear light lay over the stubbles of the harvested fields. I could see Mistress Mayeson's face when I ventured to glance sidewise at her; very quiet and white she looked, and her eyes, under the shadow of her hood, were black.

"Your kindness will avail little, though," she resumed presently, as if she had never ceased speaking. "Think you that those who care only for the food and garments I give them will risk crossing swords with such as you on my behalf?"

"They are vile wretches else," I said. "Were I in your service——" Then I bit off the words and added coolly: "If they do not come, 'twill prove a dull evening for me."

Her eyebrows arched up at that, but she replied restrained enough: "If you sought an encounter, you should have seized upon a maid who had a father and brothers. There is no one to protect me, you see, only paid servants, for good Master Fulford is too aged to stand against such as you."

I twisted the ends of my reins into a fine knot and prayed that she might begin crying soon, for then I should know what to do. At present I felt like the meanest hound on the face of the earth.

"But hitherto," she went on, "I have found that, because I have no defender, all gentlemen felt bound in honour to protect me."

"Let me pass, then, for no gentleman," I said, turning towards her with an effort at surliness.

"Why, your face is bleeding!" she cried, in a very honest surprise.

"Yes," I muttered rubbing my sleeve across the cut.

I felt her hand brush against my arm.

"Here, take my handkerchief," she begged. "Did I do that to you, and you only Sir Lucius's poor tool? Indeed I am so sorry I hurt you, Master Bondman."

"My name is Staplegate," I said, trying to be fierce and sullen, and throughout despising myself more even than I had ever despised Sir Lucius.

"Not Master John Staplegate's son?" she asked blankly, and then half to herself. "Verily, that honourable gentleman would be proud to own you!"

"Let the dead be," I meant to threaten and ended by pleading. "And as for this accursed work, I had never undertaken it, did not honour constrain me."

"Your honour constrained you to misuse a woman?" she asked. "I would you were less honourable and more honest."

"I had pledged my word," I said, and then I told her truthfully all that had passed between myself and Sir Lucius. I kept my eyes on the Don's black shoulders, and the white moonlit road beyond while I spoke, but though I did not see I felt the scorn in her whole face and voice as she commented:

"So you staked my happiness, me, on the throw of the dice?"

"I knew not what 'twas a question of," I said humbly, "and I was near willing to risk my soul to win back the Don. He is too good a steed to be left to such a fellow as Lucius."

"Look at me, Master Staplegate."

But I did not meet her eyes, only took a shamefaced glance at her white throat and round little chin.

"Am I so less worthy than your horse that I should be committed to such a man as the one you name?"

"I am the veriest hangdog," I acknowledged. "I wish you would say outright that you would like to see me flogged at the cart's tail."

"But I should not like to," she said gently. "Your being hurt would not help me."

"I cannot break my word," I muttered.

"Surely not," she assented gravely.

"But I might do this, if you bid," I resumed after a time, in desperation, for on the next hill top I could see the leafless trees and the roof of Adlingstead gleaming in the white moonlight. "Shoot me, and you can ride back to Frith. After I am dead dishonour doth not matter to me."

I looked Mistress Mayeson in the face as I spoke, and I saw her lips quiver and twitch, and then, of a sudden she broke out into a clear peal of laughter that brought the blood burning to my face.

"I offered it but to help you," I said sulkily.

"I crave your pardon, good Master Staplegate," she said very honestly, holding out her hand; she had reined in her horse and I halted, too, at her side. "But indeed—" her lips quivered with laughter again—"I was not prepared for so gallant a remedy. And 'twould be a pity for so honourable a gentleman as you to throw his life away, when I think I can myself find an easier path out of the difficulty."

She sat a moment rubbing the stock of her whip across her lips, and finally she looked at me with her eyes gleaming.

"I have it, Master Staplegate, such an excellent and honourable scheme. Let me whisper it to you."

She bent from her saddle and for an instant the edge of her hood near grazed my cheek; then she sat erect again and smiled at me.

"You have it?"

"Safely," I replied, and daring to look in her face

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now I noted the dark curls that strayed from beneath her hood across her forehead and the bright flush that was on her cheeks.

Then we put the horses forward briskly for the little that was left of the journey, till we drew rein outside the postern gate at Adlingstead. I lifted Mistress Mayeson from her saddle, and, having slipped the bridle reins over the fork of a tree so that they might easily be cast loose, I held out my hand to her.

"You dare trust me still?" I asked, watching her face.

"Aye, Master Staplegate," she replied, laying her little hand firmly in mine, and then, with eyes twinkling:

"I knew from the first you would never do this thing."

I might digest that as best I could, for there was no space to reply before she had drawn me along to the half-open gate as we entered the garden.

The wall made a black shadow all along its length, and the clumps of bushes had thick shadows at their feet, but out in the open, where the path ran up to the house, all was clear, gleaming whiteness.

On the steps by the open door stood Sir Lucius in his best velvet doublet. 'Twas so bright I could even see he had on his most courteous smile.

"I shall not fail you now," I said under my breath to the girl.

For answer I felt her fingers press tighter upon my hand.

"Welcome to Adlingstead, sweet Mistress Mayeson," said Sir Lucius, descending the steps: and he made a movement to kiss her hand, but quick as a flash she clasped both her hands about my arm.

He looked a bit disconcerted thereat and said curtly:

"You may go, Wat."

"Then my task is done?" I queried, mastering myself, though my blood was boiling at being thus ordered about like the meanest lackey.

"Yes, yes."

"The service I pledged myself to?"

"Yes."

"And the Don——"

"Take your sword and your horse and go."

"Good even then," I said curtly, and turned on the word, and Mistress Mayeson with me.

"Not so fast," cried Sir Lucius, stepping in front of us.

"'Twas not in the bargain that Mistress Mayeson should stay at Adlingstead," I explained courteously. "You bade me only bring her hither. I have done what I was pledged to do, and now she wisheth me to escort her to Stowbury."

For once he let his civility drop.

"You'll trick me, you cursed beggar, you rascallion!" he cried. "Here, Giles, Nicholas, out with you!"

"Run for the horses," I said to Mistress Mayeson, for I could hear the grooms stamping down the corridor within. Sir Lucius seized her by the wrist, and at that I let go remembrance of such benefits as he had hitherto shown me, and catching him by the scruff of the neck I struck him in the face. I meant not to hurt him, but I fear I struck harder than I thought, for when I released him he went down all of a heap by the steps and lay there groaning.

By that the two grooms were upon me with their staves, and had me at a disadvantage, for I scrupled to use my sword on such churls. For an instant I made good havoc with my fists, and then, wrenching the staff from Giles, laid him flat with a blow on the coxcomb; and beating off Nicholas, I got safe through the gate. Mistress Mayeson was sitting upright upon her horse with my bridle rein in her hand, so I had but to leap to my saddle and we were off, full gallop across the fields.

We had risked our necks over three hedges ere I felt we were in little danger of pursuit, and bade her slacken speed.

"So you have had some fighting after all, Master Staplegate," were her first words.

"Aye, but 'twas mere churl's work," I replied, rubbing my head that still ached from Nicholas' cudgel.

Just then Mistress Mayeson put her hand to her eyes and burst out crying, and, faith, I'd so little expected that of her that now I had clean forgot what to do, so I sat staring at her helplessly, till at last I ventured to query:

"Have I done aught amiss? Would you wish to go back——"

"Have you no wit at all, Master Staplegate?" she sobbed out.

"Then have I not done enough? Shall I ride back and kill Sir Lucius?"

"No, no," she said. Then with a laugh breaking through her sobs: "How droll he looked, just like a puppy, when you picked him up!"

Then she mastered herself once more, and as we rode on began furtively to wipe her eyes with her glove. So I took her kerchief from the breast of my jacket and held it out to her, "I did not use it," I said. "Here; but prithee, give it back to me again."

"Then there is something more in this world besides your horse and your sword that is precious to you?" she asked.

"Yes, now," I answered. And we went in silence the little way that was left.

It was not yet midnight when we rode into Stowbury; the moon still made the High Street light. We reined up before Master Fulford's great house, where candles were shining; perhaps tidings of Mistress Mayeson's flight had come thither, for the instant we halted, the door at the head of the stairs was flung open and the light from the candles, streaming out, merged with the moonbeams. Against the square of vivid yellow light that the doorway framed stood an old man, who, peering down at us, called:

"'Tis you, Cordelia? And safe?"

"Aye, sir," she cried, as I helped her from the saddle.

"God be with you, Mistress Mayeson," I whispered, for I had no wish to tarry and speak with Master Fulford.

"God be with you, too, Wat Staplegate," she said with her sweet face sober for a moment. "And may you ever keep your precious honour safe as to-night," she called down with a little laugh from half-way up the stairs. Then, as her form became clearly outlined against the candle light from within, she turned suddenly and threw me a kiss with her ungloved hand.

Next moment the door had closed, and I was left blinking with the light that had just gone out before my eyes.

BEULAH DIX.

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A MAN.

AFTER mass the priest, Legrand, returned to the vestryroom. The dull light of a November sky glimmered through the panes of the only window. Out of the obscurity there arose a woman, a pitiful object, with her little kerchief knotted beneath her chin, her face bathed in tears. She threw herself at the feet of the priest, crying out: "They are going to shoot him!"

"Shoot him! Who?" asked the priest.

"The Prussians—my husband"—and a sob choked the unfortunate creature. Very much affected, the priest quickly set down his chalice on a table, and, taking the hands of the poor woman in his own, made her stand up.

"But how—your husband?"

"Yes, on account of the Uhlans that were killed yesterday by the sharpshooters. The Prussians have had lots drawn this morning, and three men are to be shot; Vincent, Laideur, and my husband. Save him, reverend sir!"

"But I can do nothing," replied the priest with a discouraging gesture, and then, his bowed head resting on his hands, he began to reflect. The thought of the misfortune that was about to befall his parishioners and his own inability to avert it grieved him deeply. Not to be able to meet them—his flock, for whom he spent himself unceasingly, devoted even to sacrifice. Should he allow her to depart thus, this weeping woman who had come to ask him for her husband? "I must save them at all cost," he said to himself; and turning to the woman, "Take courage," he said, "and hope."

Hastily he took off his priestly ornaments, and directed his steps to the Mayor's residence, where was installed the captain commanding a platoon of Uhlans sent as an advanced guard. The naturally pale face of the priest grew paler and paler as the road shortened. The idea of this formidable interview made him quiver with excitement, but his excitement banished his timidity. He was conducted into the council room. Seated at a table, the captain was signing some papers. He looked the priest full in the face, and in order to anticipate a request that he dreaded, said in French in an abrupt manner:

"What do you want, sir?"

"I have come to ask pardon for the people of this village—they are innocent," stammered out the priest.

"War has terrible necessities," replied the captain. "Your sharpshooters kill a number of our men every day. We must have done with them. So much the worse for the villages that harbour them."

The priest tried to argue the matter, but all his reasons were shattered against the pitiless logic of the German officer. At length, convinced of his inability, he tried only to save one of his prisoners.

"Grant me at least the pardon of Leroy. He has three little children."

The captain showed some sign of pity; but, pointing to the table on which his papers lay, he said: "The orders are explicit. I would be untrue to my duty as a soldier. You ought to understand me, sir; you are a priest. Three of our Uhlans have been killed; we must have three victims."

Nothing was left for the priest to do but to depart; however, he did not stir. After a somewhat protracted silence, the captain raised his head from the papers with which he was busy, and snapped his fingers with a gesture of impatience. Suddenly the priest advanced, and, as if almost ashamed, he murmured:

"I have neither wife nor children. Will you accept me?"

The officer fixed his eyes upon the priest with a look of sympathy. After a moment's silence he said:

"This is a serious thing you ask of me. You are young yet. Think of it well."

"I beg you to grant it," said the priest.

Without replying, the captain began to write. Then he arose, and, holding out a sheet of paper, said:

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"Here is the order to set the man Leroy at liberty and put you in his place," and, in a grave tone, he added: "Reverend sir, will you do me the great honour to give me your hand?"

The priest extended his hand, and heartily clasped that of the German officer.

With a light step, so happy at the thought of his sacrifice that, regardless of his dignity, he was disposed to run, the priest rapidly reached the school where the condemned men were imprisoned. The commander of the guard, a Uhlan officer, trailed his sabre before the door with a great clank. Without deigning to answer the salute of the priest, he took roughly the sheet of paper; but, after reading it over, the harsh expression of his face grew softer. He drew himself up to his full height, and, raising his hand to his shako, he said respectfully:

"Will you please enter, sir?"

At the door of the school-room the priest begged the officer to summon Leroy, who, overwhelmed with grief, seized the hands of the priest, murmuring:

"My wife, my poor little ones."

"Courage, my friend," said the priest. "Do not lose hope."

With tact, he told his parishioner that he was pardoned on account of his family. The man began to laugh and dance, almost beside himself. He wanted to run home immediately, but the priest succeeded in calming him, and at length they both set out on the road to his house. Near a gate the priest said:

"Remain here. I am going to inform your wife."

She, surrounded by her children, whose merry voices were now hushed, was sadly working in her humble cottage; but the beaming face of the priest as he approached announced the joyful news.

"He is free!"

Without replying, the priest smiled.

"He is coming," and husband and wife were in each other's arms in silent joy.

"We have not thanked you," said the man at last.

The priest, very much moved, replied: "Your happiness is my reward." He clasped the hands of the husband and wife, kissed the children and hastened to return to the school. In a corner of the school-room the forest-keeper, Laideur, a veteran of the Italian and Crimean campaigns, gloomy, his arms crossed, stoically smoked his pipe. Near him, Vincent, a young man about eighteen years of age, his head resting on his hands, seemed to sleep.

The priest sat down between the two prisoners. His exhortations and his encouragements made the young man sob; Laideur swore. The priest took each by the arm, and, knowing that no one would communicate with them, he said to them:

"We must stand together by-and-bye. You, Laideur, must set us an example, an old soldier like you."

"You are going to be with us?" asked the forest-keeper.

"Yes, indeed, instead of Leroy, you understand. He has a wife and children."

Carried away with enthusiasm, Laideur exclaimed:

"You are indeed a hero! Surely, we will stand by each other. If I could only have killed a few more of those cock-sparrows, but my rheumatism——"

With a smile, the priest calmed the excitement of the worthy fellow, and then, turning to Vincent, asked if he wished to confess. The young man consented. "And you, Laideur?" he asked.

"Oh, as to me, you know I am not pious."

"Do it for my sake."

"Well, now, would that give you pleasure?"

"Much pleasure, my friend."

"Very well then," said the forest-keeper, pulling up his sleeves as if about to unload a heavy burden.

On his return to his vestry—for he had obtained permission to remain free in order to make his final arrangements—the priest asked the sexton to summon the inhabitants of the village to meet him at the church at three o'clock.

According to habit, after his breakfast, he took some bits of bread and sugar and went into the inclosure in front of his house. On catching sight of him his donkey stopped feeding and advanced towards him. The priest put his arms round her neck, and with the palm of his hand stroked her velvety nostrils, repeating: "My good beast! My good beast!"

His tenderness was extended to all the animals, companions of his solitude, and these, rendered gentle by his great kindness, offered themselves to his caresses. Meantime the donkey had freed her head and walked round her master, snuffing the air, and then began to bray.

"Greedy one, is that what you want?" said the priest, drawing out from his cassock a piece of bread.

Sounds of clucking and flapping of wings now claimed his attention. He stopped, and cocks and hens came to peck from his hands. His rabbits were not forgotten, either. While giving them some bran he slowly passed his hand through the fur of their rounded backs. As his donkey had followed him he handed her a bit of sugar, and the beast began to munch it, shaking her ears with visible satisfaction. Her round and gentle eyes seemed to regard her master tenderly. The priest felt a cold chill pass through his frame, and, with bowed head, his hands behind his back, he went into his garden.

In the midst of the squares of earth glittered the clean gravel walks. The leafless pear trees stretched their arms, covered with straw, in parallel lines along the wall. The priest fastened up a loosened branch with a bit of osier, and dreamily continued his walk in the bright sunshine along the garden wall. Pausing at length, he opened a little door looking out on the fields.

Silent, bathed in light and moisture, the plain stretched far away. In places, stacks of wheat, rounded like dovecots, or similar to little houses, formed hamlets of straw. To the left, a forest of beech trees joined the pine wood, which barred the horizon. For a long time the priest fixed his eyes on this familiar landscape, as if to imprint it upon them; then he closed the door. But his look, passing above the walls, stopped at the

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church clock. The short hand was between one and two, the other had passed over the half of the dial-plate.

"In three hours I will be dead," thought he, and instinctively he crossed his arms over his breast as if to protect it against the bullets. Three hours longer and he would be nothing more than a lifeless body, nailed up in his coffin. In his morbid imagination, he seemed to hear the dull thud of the first spadeful of earth upon the wood.

To die thus, in full health, in the vigour of life, was this possible? How many simple pleasures in his happy life, without desires and without ambitions; the duties of his priesthood, the alleviation of the poor and suffering, the intercourse with his brethren, the care of his animals and of his garden. Ah! why had he committed this folly of offering himself as a sacrifice? Distracted with anguish, he sprang with a bound to the gate and opened it abruptly! His look followed the grassy path that led from the foot of the wall, and winding between the ploughed fields, joined the road. In thought he hastened along this road, dashed through the forest into well-known paths; yonder, some miles away, was a railway station.

The priest bent his head forward in anxious gaze. The plain was deserted as far as the horizon; no one would see him flee. He would reach the station, take the train, and go far, far away; would be free, would live, would live!

Maddened, he was about to rush forward, bare-headed; but his word of honour—but Leroy.

With a sob, he closed the gate, and, kneeling, he called to his aid, with all the strength of his faith, that Saviour who, at the approach of death, had experienced in the garden on the Mount of Olives all its terrors, all its agonies—dying as it were, in advance. He besought Him to aid him to the end, and restore to him his fortitude. Then, with renewed strength, and recognising that solitude and reveries induced weakness, he hastened back to his house. His accounts made out exactly, his little property classified and valued, he made his will, leaving small sums to the most needy of his parishioners, and little souvenirs to others. Finally, he bequeathed his donkey to a wealthy family, with the request that they would never sell her, and thus spare her from spending her last days in misery, dragging along the roads the cart of some pedlar.

Having completed these arrangements, he passed a long time in fervid prayer, asking pardon for his faults and relying wholly on the mercy and justice of God.

As the clock struck three the priest descended the stairway of his house and proceeded to the church.

This was as full as on days of high festival. In the presence of the misfortune that was about to fall upon the village, even the most thoughtless had come to assemble about the man who represented the highest moral authority. In his surplice the priest passed through the crowd of worshippers, and, ascending the pulpit steps, after a few moments of meditation, he said:

"My brethren, I am very glad to see you gathered here in such great numbers. The authorities have been pleased to grant me the pardon of Leroy; but I have not been able to obtain that of Laideur and Vincent. I have seen them and comforted them. They are ready to die as Frenchmen and as Christians."

Without fine phrases, but with perfect simplicity, he spoke of duty, self-sacrifice, and love of country. His words sent a thrill through this assembly, whose ideal was ordinarily confined to material interests.

Turning towards the altar, he intoned in a firm voice, the *De Profundis*. Then he gave his blessing to the congregation, praying for patience and resignation, and requesting each one to return to his home and there remain. Leaving the church, he was seen to direct his steps to the school.

The next morning the inhabitants of the village learnt that their priest had been shot by the Prussians.

MAURICE LEMERCIER.

M. A. P.

EVERYBODY has heard of Mr. T. P. O'Connor. Many people know him as an Irishman, many as an M.P., and many again as the most brilliant journalist living. He founded *The Star*, he established *The Sun*, and by them made possible the halfpenny daily paper as exemplified in *The Daily Mail*, *The Leader*, *The Morning*, and others in the Provinces.

Amongst the various good and bad qualities incidental to T.P.'s nature it is, however, not so well known that he is on the friendliest terms with more well-known people than most men, that he is a capital after-dinner speaker, with an exhaustless fund of anecdote and humour, that he is to be found at every social gathering of distinction in London, and that, therefore, he ought to be, if he could only be induced to be, a perfect editor of a Society paper. This latter thought seems to have occurred to T.P. For some months past he has been laying his plans to bring out a paper which without doubt should become the most interesting ever published.

It will be remembered that in the early days of T.P.'s journalistic career, when he started *The Star*, the most noticeable feature in that then most noticeable paper was the column headed "Mainly About People." Before that time no journalist had been bold enough to exploit the personal par and tell us what famous people were doing in their leisure hours, in their houses, and the hundred and one things we now hear about them. It was in that column, too, that T.P. proved that, brilliant as he was as a literary critic, slashing as a political leader-writer, he was at his best in drawing a pen portrait of a man or a woman; in describing the one or the other, from the innermost beats of their hearts to the cut of the coat or the colour of the frock.

This feature in modern journalism was, as I say, initiated by Mr. O'Connor, and he now intends to enlarge upon it by editing a paper to be called "M.A.P.," which means "Mainly About People." It will be published from the Offices of *Pearson's Weekly*, every Thursday, at the price of One Penny.

It is not advisable at the present moment to give away too many of the distinctive features of "M.A.P.," but one or two may be revealed. First, the paper will be entirely non-political and non-sectarian. There will not be a line that is not personal, and yet there will not be a line that is not pleasant. The reader will not have to tear off its cover, or to leave it behind in the railway train, or to hide it from the boy or the maid; and the husband who does not bring it home to his wife will have to face a clouded brow and a divided household. Influential people in every branch of life have given Mr. O'Connor interviews, articles from their pens, and information generally that would never see the light of day except it were given to the friend as apart from the journalist.

ASK FOR THE FIRST NUMBER OF

M. A. P.

∴ ON THURSDAY, JUNE 16th. ∴

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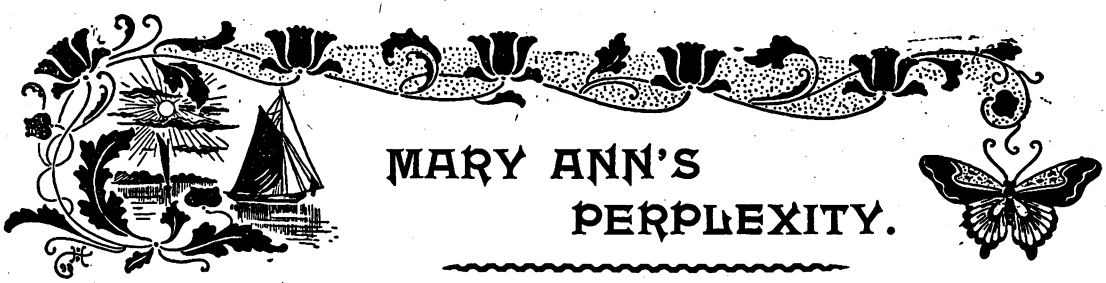

MARY ANN'S PERPLEXITY.

Mary Ann Davis was in sore perplexity.

In the first place, her bread had refused to rise, for almost the first time in her experience as a housekeeper, and on the following day the minister was coming to tea.

And in the next place, Mr. Popham, the grocer, had proposed to her.

He had already proposed to, married and buried, three estimable women.

Mary Ann lived in the square white house which had been her father's, with no companions but her cat and the old man who took care of the garden. One after another of her family had gone away never to come back, and the old house had grown silent and lonely as the changes went on; but Mary Ann was attached to the place, and it seemed to her that nowhere in the world did the sun shine brighter and warmer than it shone into the windows of the old house.

Mary Ann had been a pretty girl, and though she was now past forty, her hair was still soft and abundant, and lay against her white, wrinkled forehead in little golden crinkles, and the bloom on her cheeks were still delicate and dainty.

The time had been, and it was not so far distant either, when the people of Harden had fully expected and believed that Mary Ann Davis and James Meader would be made one, and live out their quiet and uneventful lives side by side, as the majority of Harden people had done before them.

James was "well-to-do," and the Meader farm was one of the best in the country. James fully sustained the family reputation in this respect. But time went on and he still continued single; and it "really did seem that he didn't get on one mite with his courtship," so the wise women of Harden said as they talked the matter over.

The Meaders were notoriously slow people, and if James had any designs on the heart of Mary Ann Davis, he probably thought that there was time enough. "No use to be in a hurry," was the motto which should have been inscribed on the family coat of arms of the Meaders.

Mary Ann herself had not been without some expectations in that direction, but it had been so long about, and nothing had come of it, that she had practically given up the idea.

James had a practice of coming over to her house regularly every other Tuesday evening, and staying until nine o'clock, never later. His conversation was mainly about the weather, past and present—the meetings at the school-house and the crops round about Harden.

And whenever he came, after he had seated himself in the chintz-covered chair and stroked the cat's back, he took out his pocket-book and extracted therefrom a large blue envelope which seemed to contain something bulky. He would hold it in his hand, feel it as if to make sure that nothing had been lost out of it, and then return it to his pocket, and he always sighed when he put it away,

This performance had become so much a matter of course that Mary Ann had ceased to wonder at it, or to feel any curiosity in respect to it.

But now, as stated in the beginning, Mary Ann was in sore perplexity.

As troubles never come singly, so in the midst of this perplexity about the bread, Mr. Popham's proposal had come suddenly into the contentment of Mary Ann's life. The idea that she might be considered eligible to the position of Mrs. Popham No. 4., had never flashed across Mary Ann's mind.

"Goodness me!" said she, "you could have knocked me down with a feather when he said: 'Miss Davis, the life of a widowed man is very lonely, and I want someone to help me to look after my business. Will you be Mrs. Popham?'"

And this was how affairs stood at the time we introduce Mary Ann to our readers. She had given a great deal of time and thought to the grocer's proposal, and suddenly it flashed across her that in all troubles and perplexities, people generally applied to their minister for advice.

And how providential it was that the Rev. John Tuttle was coming to tea! Mary Ann did the best she could with the bread, and resolved to confide in Mr. Tuttle.

So when they were comfortably seated at the table and the minister had done ample justice to the cake, and was busy with his mince pie, Mary Ann told the reverend gentleman that Mr. Popham had proposed to her.

The food was excellent, and the minister passed up his plate for a second helping before he replied.

"Well, Miss Davis, our neighbour is an exemplary man, but the question at issue is, do you love him well enough to promise to honour and obey him until death does you part?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't, Mr. Tuttle."

"I tell you what, Miss Davis," said the minister, after a pause, no doubt inspired by the pie, "let you and I join ourselves in wedlock, and that will be answer enough for the grocer."

"Oh, good gracious, Mr. Tuttle!" cried Mary Ann, feeling, as she afterwards said, as if she should sink down into her boots.

The minister pressed his suit with ardour, and so a third perplexity came into Mary Ann's life. But it was finally decided that should have a week to consider: it was now Wednesday, and as the grocer was coming for his answer on Wednesday week she appointed Thursday for the minister.

As the days went on, Mary Ann's perplexity increased.

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She was no nearer a decision than she had been at first. However, she decided she would offend one.

Right in the midst of it Tuesday came round again, and James Meader dropped in to make his usual call. Being shown into the parlour and duly installed in the armchair, he stroked the back of the cat, hemmed and cleared his throat, then took out his pocket-book and examined the blue envelope. Then he sighed and returned it to his pocket.

Mary Ann fidgeted about, upset a pot of geraniums, and knocked down James' best hat which he had placed carefully on the cover of the sewing machine, and when she should have said "yes" she said "no," and when she should have said "No" she said "Yes."

"Mary Ann," said he at length, with an effort, "Mary Ann!"

"Well, Mr. Meader?"

"Something or other seems to trouble you."

"Yes. There is something," said Mary Ann, feeling the sentences jerked out of her by some influence she could not resist. "I am awfully bothered. I was never so upset and perplexed in my mortal life. Never!"

"Why, Mary Ann? Is it about the cows, or—."

"It isn't anything of that kind," said Mary Ann tartly; "you see the fact of it is, James, I have had two proposals of marriage."

"What!" ejaculated James, rising slowly in his surprise, "not two from one man?"

"No, two from two men."

"Great goodness, Mary Ann, what men are they?"

"Mr. Popham and the minister."

James began smoothing the back of the cat in deep thought.

Then he took out his pocket-book and produced the blue envelope, felt it, replaced it in the pocket-book and sighed.

"What are you going to do about it, Mary Ann?"

"I don't know," said Mary Ann, nervously plaiting and unplaiting the hem of her white apron, "if I have the minister the other will be put out, and if I have Popham, the minister will be put out."

"Well, yes, that stands to reason," said James, feeling the pocket-book where the blue envelope was lying, and evidently resisting the impulse to draw it forth again.

"I'm in a dreadful fix," said Mary Ann, "for you see this is Tuesday, and Mr. Popham is to come for his answer on Wednesday, and the minister is to come for his on Thursday."

"My goodness!" said James, rising to the occasion, "there is only one way out of it; I'll come for my answer on Tuesday, which is to-day," and James put his arm round Mary Ann's waist—a little shyly at first, but growing bolder as he got used to it.

"Why, James Meader!" cried Mary Ann.

"It isn't any use to put it off," said James, drawing her nearer as he became accustomed to the situation. "I've been coming here quite a long time, Mary Ann, but I never felt as if it was best to hurry. Marry in haste and repent at leisure, you know."

"Oh, my! This is so sudden," said Mary Ann. "I don't know as I shall ever get used to it."

"Yes, you will," said James warmly; "I'm getting used to it already. My goodness, Mary Ann, the more I think of it the more I'm convinced that I've been a fool for putting it off for so long! But I always was a leetle bit slow. And I wanted to have a window cut in the back-kitchen and the water put into the sink before I asked you. But I'll see to it as I go home. Great goodness, Mary Ann, I come pretty nigh losing you!"

And suddenly releasing Mary Ann, he produced his pocket-book and took a hasty squint at the blue envelope.

"James," said Mary Ann, "before this goes any further I want to ask you what is in the envelope. I've seen you take it out over and over again, and I've got to know what is in it before I decide between the grocer, the minister, and you."

James looked a little abashed, but he opened the envelope, and there, tied by a faded blue ribbon, was a lock of yellow hair—the hair of a child—and written on the worn piece of paper which inclosed the hair were these lines:

If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two.

Tears came to Mary Ann's eyes, and she drew close to the side of her old lover.

"Why, James!" she exclaimed, "who'd ever have thought of keeping that?"

"I did. Yes, Mary Ann, that's the little lock of hair you cut off from your head and gave me when you were ten year old and was agoin' to spend the winter with your Aunt Nancy. I always carry it with me for fear the house might catch fire and it would get burnt up. And shall it be the grocer or the minister or——"

"You," said Mary Ann, and the blush of her cheek was just as becoming to her as if she had been twenty-five years younger—at least, that was James' opinion.

OSCAR.

WHAT DO DREAMS MEAN?

WHO has not at one time or another had some curious dream, the significance of which has perplexed him? Some dreams are caused by an overheated imagination or an impaired digestion, and others are so trivial as not to cause any grounds for a second thought being bestowed upon them.

On the other hand, there are many dreams which have an unquestionable significance. Many of them are influenced by our daily actions and thoughts, and frequently we find ourselves doing in our dreams what we would do in our daily life. These exercise our minds, and if we only knew what they portend we might be able to avoid events that afterwards come to pass. The history of the world is full of instances where dreams of a prophetic character have taken place, and the belief in them is shared by scientific and intelligent writers in every part of the world.

Occasionally a so-called dream book or two has been published pretending to give an explanation of these curious phenomena, but, as we all know, most of them are absolutely unreliable and are nothing but catchpenny publications.

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. MADAME GEORGES will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "DREAMS," c/o. *Short Stories* Offices. Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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The Ladies of the Earth

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Meeting.

As for the girl Seward, Hardy was told by his agent that she occupied a flat in Bloomsbury, a flat rather well furnished, where, with a servant of her own, she lived alone. And, without five minutes' delay, Hardy was in a carriage hurrying to the address given.

He doubted if this could be the girl he wanted. She lived, certainly, under another name. And how came Ada, the nurse-maid, to be flourishing in such a style? Morbidly anxious as he was to have her safe and sure in his own keeping, it hardly occurred to him that this very opulence accounted for the reticences and hesitations of her brother with regard to her.

But in twenty minutes he was sure. On a third floor a servant led him into a snug drawing-room, and there, on the wall, he saw an oval coloured photograph: and he recognised the slim bust, and the little Chinese eyes, and the piquant Geisha-girl face, warm-yellow in tint.

At the door, the servant, a narrow-browed, mean-looking creature, had told him that Miss Seward was away; and as he wished to speak further, she had asked him within.

Where, then, was Miss Seward?

She had gone away.

When?

Four hours before.

Where to?

To Dover.

Was that certain?

Quite certain.

But whatever had she gone to Dover for?

That the servant could not say, or would not say.

But was Miss Seward coming back soon?

The servant did not think so. Miss Seward had left her sufficient money to keep her for some time.

Did the servant know much of Miss Seward's private affairs?

She knew something. She and Miss Seward were very good friends indeed. Miss Seward sometimes spoke of things to her. But, of course, she did not know everything.

What did "*everything*" mean?

It meant nothing.

Then Hardy began to woo, to implore; then to speak of big matters; to say that all this was important to more than he could name. But the girl smirked, and did not follow that flight. The last thing that occurred to him was a bribe; only in the final moment of his despair did the thought flash through his mind. He hinted at hazard a hundred pounds, and the promptness of the response surprised him.

It was a large sum for a poor girl.

Yes; and all he wanted to know was *why* Miss Seward had gone to Dover.

She had gone in order to go over to France to the little Chinaman who was in love with her.

And now it was the turn of the servant to be surprised—at the swift energy with which Hardy vanished from her eye-sight.

He bore on his breast the initials of this girl, Seward; she was *his*, his very own.

But he was in this dilemma: that things far more momentous on their surface demanded his personal presence where he was. It needed all the acumen of his shrewd eye to determine which was the main fact which must influence his conduct.

He drove to the nearest post-office, and telegraphed to the manager of the London, Chatham and Dover railway.

There was at this moment not a hope left to Britain. The Admiralty had chains of steamers, intercommunicating with each other, and with the south-east coast, whose task was to watch and to report. And the nation now knew that on the morrow of this final-looking, sunless Wednesday, was due the horror of ultimate overthrow—the going beneath the wave of the last emerging rock of the old world.

Nor had the general mass of the nation the faintest suspicion of any power in the earth which could save, or even momentarily help, it.

If a heavenly host should appear in mid-sky wrapped in flames of vengeance, then, perhaps, that surge might be stemmed. But though the people were now far from doubting the interest of the gods, their reasons were the

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offspring of too advanced a period of Time to await any such manifestation.

It was known that a wholly inconceivable number of floating things of every kind were massed upon the extreme north-west coast of France; and that in their passage over to England they would have one of the finest war-fleets the world had ever seen to protect them—against nothing!

And now—in this hour of world-tragedy—the British people offered to the "Eyes that regard" a good spectacle. The panic was gone. In such a place as the City of London there was, of course, no business done; but everywhere else there was business done. Shops were open; post-offices were open; the printing-press throbbed. If a man met a man in the street, one pallid lip spoke to the other pallid consciousness of the dark weather, of a business matter, of a family affair—of everything except the Chinese. The subject of the Chinese in these last days was rather looked upon as being in bad taste. The lower classes spoke of them—but, in general, with splendidly curved lip. With a sublime stoicism, with a regal disdain, Britain waited for her overthrow.

Nearly everyone made a point of going about his ordinary work.

In the last resort, *the lip* remains. It is the final retort of a noble man, of a grand nation, to Destiny. "The mind and spirit remain invincible. . . ."

What could Britain do now? She could smile.

And by this her pallid smile in that hour, she proved, in truth, her divine right to the Empire of the Earth.

Besides smiling, every man, and most boys, managed to provide themselves with some sort of weapon, sharp or blunt, dull or gleaming, which they laid quietly by.

A gentleman at Highgate had for a week been training a fine specimen of the British bull-dog to fly at a Mongolian effigy set up in his garden.

In reality, the arm of England was as strong as her soul; but she knew the strength of her soul, and did not suspect the strength of her arm.

Her arm was John Hardy.

At least he was the main muscle of it. He was as much the West as Yen How was the East.

But what is this shadow that dogs his steps?—something absurd, grotesque, yet terrible?

At eight he had sent the telegram to the railway company. At nine he drove away once more from Cavendish Square, leaving a host of orders with an almost permanent committee of naval men who now attended upon him. And he had no sooner driven away, than a man in wide sombrero was asking at his door if he was at home.

In this man, Edrapol, there was not now, if there had ever been, an atom of venom against Hardy. He was merely the slave of punctilio. In the view of that frivolous old brain, nothing in the world could compare in importance with the importance of an *affaire d'honneur*, a delicate point, a shade of usage. The thing first of all that a gentleman must do—in every case—whatever happened—was to settle "a delicate point."

Also, he knew the greatness of Hardy. And his vanity was prone, the moment he found himself in safety on English soil, to measure swords with him.

He knew, too, that soon the Chinese must be here also, and then . . . . what could be done? *Voilà une affaire manquée.* Nothing could be more annoying to a gentleman than an *affaire manquée.*

It was clear that whatever he did must be instantaneously done. The morrow would, perhaps, not "do his affair."

He took the broad hat from his long-haired white head, and he bowed largely, as old Bobbie himself informed him that Hardy was from home.

Edrapol asked whither he had gone, and the old man said:

"To Dover, sir."

Hardy vanished from her eye-sight.

Edrapol asked no more. He had brought over on his person a good sum in specie; he had also rings on his fingers worth money. He jumped into a cab, and drove in haste away.

With that noble phlegm of which we have spoken, things in England still, at this eleventh hour, ran, for the most part, their usual course. Few people were moving about; yet the trains ran empty, and the show of civilization continued when its reality seemed like a spent heart, about to beat its final throb.

So that Edrapol found a longed-for train about half an hour after Hardy's departure; and both engines, flying simultaneously through Kent, were "express."

As for Hardy, he reached Harbour Station in his rocking train within an hour and twenty minutes from his start.

He hurried to the Cross Wall; and there he had no difficulty in learning that the girl had certainly not hired any local craft, nor started from Dover that day. Nor had any craft left Dover eastward for some time.

The natural conclusion was that Ada Seward was still in Dover.

Nevertheless, Hardy spied about the harbour for some time among the steamboats, and pointed out one to a blue-jacket, named Brassey, who accompanied him. Brassey was to arrange with her captain; have her fires lit and banked; and Hardy scribbled a note to South Front Barracks, signing his name with the initials P. C. N. S.; it was a request for a small three-pounder and ammunition, which he instructed Brassey to mount for'ard on the designated steamer. He himself hurried to the Royal Ship Hotel, followed by a train of watermen, policemen, and residents, eager to serve him.

Nothing was so certain as that, if the girl were there, in a

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small place like Dover, he would quickly know it. In a few minutes fifty men were dissecting the town for him, and very soon he had the whole history of her stay in Dover.

She had put up for two hours at the Lord Warden Hotel; and had then left it, taking her portmanteau, in a cab. In the small period of her stay, she had made herself singularly friendly with one of the chamber-maids of the hotel, and confided to her the surprising secret that she was about to set out for Dunkirk. The cabman who took her away was found: and he stated that, having driven for some distance east towards St. Margaret-at-Cliffe, along the high road, his fare had ordered him to turn down a bye-road, leading directly to the shore. His surprise was immense when, at about a mile from the Upper Foreland Lighthouse, which was burning all day, she again ordered him to stop and take down her trunk. He did so, laid it on the sands, and was paid. The last he saw as he drove away was the girl sitting on the box, with lonely outlook over the dim sea.

Was there no ship in the offing?

There might have been; he could not say. One could not see many yards over the sea through the dark. He was certain that there was no ship with burning lights.

Here, then, was the last link: the chain ending at the girl watching the drear sea from her box on the sands.

It did not, however, need a very vivid imagination to conjecture why she sat there; and in half-an-hour after hearing the news, Hardy had the North Pier Signal-Light dwindling into nothingness on his port quarter; and the downs-trotter which bore him was panting and quivering as she had not panted for many a day. He calculated that the girl had, at most, an hour's start of him.

As he passed out between the two piers, Edrupol arrived at Priory Station, and began to make inquiries for Hardy. After a time he heard the truth; but his disappointment was solaced by the news that Hardy would very likely return before morning.

At this time, Ada Seward, borne in one of those safe, but rather clumsy, Havre-Antwerp boats, was fifteen miles or so on her way from the English coast.

Some months before this a singular adventure had befallen the girl.

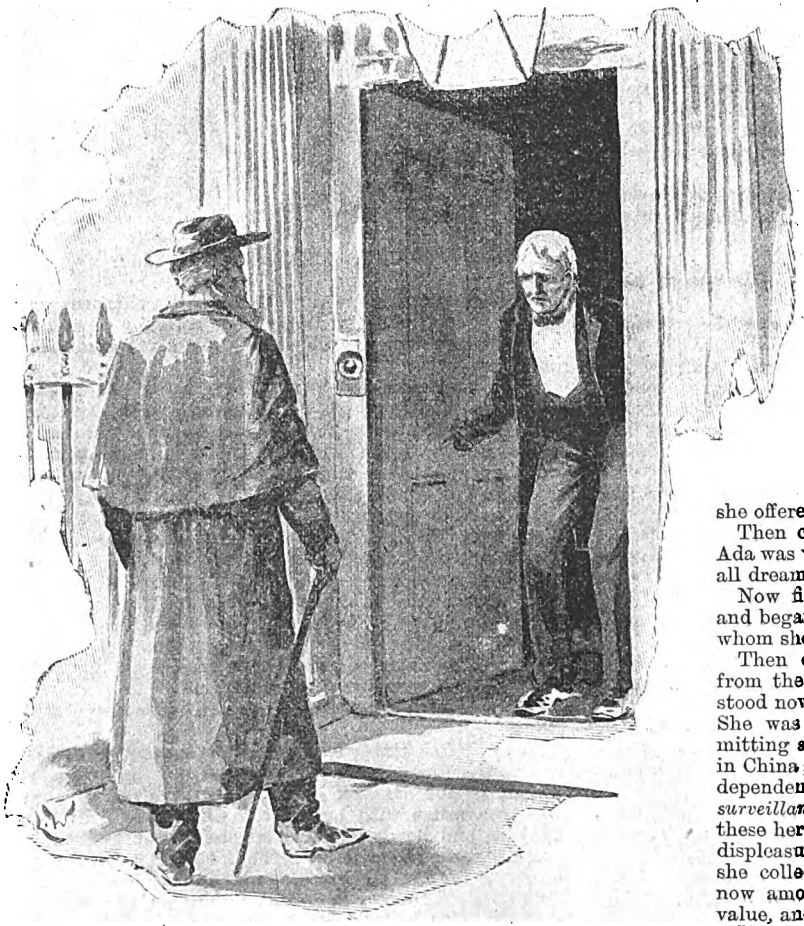
Walking along the street, she had been accosted by a man—a Yankee, as she judged by his goat beard, his lank lounge, and his talk.

He nodded with cool confidence to her, and, with oily modulations, he said this:

"Well, young woman, I guess you are in luck's way this time, anyhow."

In ten minutes he had left her, and leaving her, insinuated £50 in Bank of England notes into her hand. This, he explained, was only "to go on with" for a day or so.

He was not the principal, he said, but only an agent—"matter of business"—in which, to tell the truth, he did not stand in so badly. But he was not the principal in the deal: the principal she would see on the next evening at the hour and place which he named.



Bobbie informed him that Hardy was from home.

The "principal" was a huge pig-tailed, silk-dressed Chinaman—a great man in his country.

All he wanted of Ada Seward was to be permitted to buy her grand houses, and carriages and footmen, and gowns, and luxuries. For this, nothing, on his honour, in return—save that she should be under his eye, and obey him as a daughter. The Yankee acted as go-between; and Ada thought she would like all this.

So, away now with Pattison's, and the nursery; and shopping now all day for Ada at Peter Robinson's, the carriage waiting outside.

She changed her name, breaking with her poor, but proud, relations, who, in spite of her protestations, believed that her foot had slipped. Her brother tossed back the gold she offered him in her face.

Then came proposals from the "principal." Ada was wanted in China, where wealth beyond all dream awaited her. She refused.

Now first she heard the name of Yen How, and began to understand. That little doctor at whom she had scoffed. . . . !

Then came pressure, threats. But apart from the pressure, and the threats, she understood now that she had sold herself into slavery. She was subjected to a most rigorous, unremitting *surveillance*, like an upper-class woman in China; and she had at bottom a touchy, independent pride of character. Add to this *surveillance* the pressure, the threats, and to these her uneasy consciousness of her people's displeasure, and what she did may be guessed: she collected all the trinkets about her, which now amounted to many hundreds of pounds' value, and she ran away.

It was then that she set up on her own account in the Bloomsbury flat

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Already she was too much of a lady to do without a servant.

She hid herself with such absolute craft that neither "principal," nor "agent," nor for a long time the agents of Hardy, nor her brother, could find her.

It was on hearing of this flight that Yen How decided that, whatever happened, none of the women of England must be killed.

Then, when the end was near, when it was certain that England was doomed, a noble throe leapt into life within this girl. She conceived the quixotic, but subjectively fine, notion of sacrificing herself for her country. On condition that England was spared, she would go to Yen.

And boldly breaking from her seclusion, she presented herself with this proposal before the "agent"; and agent and principal, in a room in Portland Street, where the principal lived now in strictest retirement, gloated over this thing.

And they two, with elaborate cautions and precautions, made two voyages to the French coast, one with the glad message in the girl's own writing, from which they returned with Yen How's "Come;" and one to arrange minute preliminaries of the meeting.

And thus it happened that, in order to get to France, Ada Seward sat alone on her box on the Foreland sands, and looked across the sea.

She was genuinely confident that she was "saving" something large and not very definite; and, as she stepped into the boat which quickly made its appearance at the surf, the thought in her beating, yet bold, heart was this: What a One am I!

In order to lay his eyes once more upon this girl at the earliest moment, Yen How was ready to fling to the winds, or at least postpone, a world of affairs which no head but his could surely organise. But the momentum of events overpowered him. He could not go.

He himself chose the safest-looking, tidiest, and smartest of the smaller craft of which the Outer Harbour, the Commercial Dock, and the Naval Dock were now one thickly crowded mass.

He had then been at Dunkirk two days, making the Casino des Dunes his head-quarters. But when he looked abroad upon that once neatest of cities, and considered the heaped-up horror of its red streets, and the whirling drama of mixed revel and warlike preparations going forward within its walls, he knew that here, at least, his bride could not come.

Standing, however, a little back from the Sea Baths at Rosendaël, two miles away, was a lonely villa, backed by the desolate sand-dunes, and within eat-shot of the continual rumour of the shore. Here, at eleven in the night, almost alone, restless, perambulating, expecting, was Yen How.

He had rescued himself with a sort of stealth from Dunkirk.

He was like some singer, the darling of the world, who yet is the secret victim of drink; and while the plaudits still ring through the opera-house, *he*, in the inmost recess of the green-room, has the tilting bottle at his lips.

By midnight the lights of Dunkirk were well in sight of the steamer which bore Ada Seward. The boat was manned by Japanese, men in whom Yen How had confidence. But she was unarmed.

She was travelling at her utmost speed, and carried only one light—a mast-head light.

This fact made her *outré*, an object of observation; it was sufficient to hint her identity; and behind her, straining every timber to catch her, came frothing a slightly faster boat.

So that when the boat ahead was perhaps not half a mile from her anchorage nearly opposite Rosendaël, the boat behind was five hundred yards only from the boat ahead; and it was then that the former sent a guess-work shot, but a shot aimed by Hardy's own hand, into the stern-works of the other.

She had been accosted by a man.

The Japanese boat at once shot round, and went steaming in a changed direction, rudderless. Consternation reigned on her decks: over the sea came to Hardy's ship sounds of shouting voices.

The girl, who had been lying in sleep on the red-velvet cabin-cushions, rushed on deck. And as she reached it, again she heard the boom of cannon, and screamed.

And all that happened from that moment during ten minutes was a mere horrid whirl to her; there was a scampering of men, and yells, and everywhere a rush of the sea, and a leap into a boat, and a singing in her ears, and a smell like brimstone, and the flash of a bull's-eye in her eyes.

Then she felt firmness beneath her feet, and presently she was crying, half-lying back on cushions.

Hardy, sitting near, eyed her curiously for some minutes of silence. Here was a force greater than a 100-ton gun, great as the moon and the tides; old Astarté crying there in a dainty West-end bonnet—the strong sex of woman.

The presence of the girl, in his power at last, filled him with a certain calm. With her, he felt he might win.

The sobs died gradually lower. And he said:

"You feel better now?"

"Yes—thank you—sir," she answered jerkily.

Up to now she had not recognised him.

"Then I can talk to you. You understand that it was to get *you* that I sank the other ship?"

"*Me?*" she queried, sitting up at once in wide-awake interest.

"Yes. I knew you were going to Yen How, and I wanted at all hazards to prevent you. Whatever induced you to act in that unworthy way?"

"Which unworthy way, sir? But stop, are you——"

"Yes—we have met before. But that is not the point. Tell me, why have you been so foolish and wicked, Ada?"

"Oh, come now, this is a little too much, you know!" cried Ada. "Who are you? And what right have you to take me in this way? *I* foolish and wicked? It is absolutely untrue; and I don't think you'd be ungentlemanly enough to treat a poor girl in this way if you knew all."

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He stole stooping up to the window.

"Well then, tell me all. And do not cry, because that wastes time."

"Oh, it is all very well to talk in that way, sir!" she answered saucily, though her heart forbode her at the look of the face before her. "Who are you? I am not aware by what right——"

"But you are wasting my time. John Hardy is my name, and I have the right of a man trying to serve his country. Tell me now."

"Oh, John Har——! Well, you will excuse me, won't you? I was not to know that. But was it you, then, all the time, at the music——"

"Yes. Now tell me."

"Why I was going, you mean? Well, if it comes to that, wasn't I going for the same reason which you say—to serve my country, too?"

"Is that really so?"

"It is, sir."

"And how?"

"Well, since you seem to know about me and Yen How—didn't he give me to understand that, if I came, he would save England from the Chinese? And isn't that why I am going to him? To make him keep his army away from England?"

At this exhibition of inherent confidence in her power over Yen, this radical, unquestioning trust in the might of her sex, a smile flitted through the brain of Hardy. He said:

"Then you are not wicked, after all; but only foolish. As I have you in my hands, and as I am going to take you back to England, I will let you understand why. You are right in believing that Yen How is very much attached to you; that is so; I know it well. I believe that his attachment to you is as extraordinary in its force as the man himself is extraordinary. Well now; but can you be so simple as to think that the way to make use of this infatuation for the good of your country is to come and put yourself in his power in this fashion? Supposing he even tried to keep his armies from going over to England and killing us all, he could not permanently succeed, you know; and supposing he succeeded, you have sense enough to know, have you not, that England would be no good at all with the rest of the world full of yellow men? In that case she had better go under, too, like the rest, don't you think? You would not care to live in such a kennel, nor would I, nor any of us English. So, you see, you are throwing away yourself for nothing. But I, now, have a better card to play, I am thinking! Do you know that I have been searching everywhere for you for weeks? My idea was this: that this vast Chinese people would be no good at all when confronted with the harsh, steady, untiring frown of England—provided we could only get their leader well dead. That is the first thing to do. Yen How is the weak point of all that great host; and you, Ada, are the weak point of Yen How. That is why I wanted to have you safe in my hands all this time, so as to be sure that you were there. If you are in England, I have not a doubt that Yen How will come, like a fish to the bait; and if he comes, as sure as fire we'll catch him. But if I let you go over to him in this way to France, you see, don't you, how that would spoil everything?"

"I see, sir," said Ada.

"Well, now, in what we have got to do to-night you can help us: we want to let Yen How know that you are safe in England, and in my hands. He must not have any doubt about that in his mind; and as he is expecting you, I suppose, in the ship I have sunk, he will have a doubt when she does not arrive, unless we enlighten him. He will think very likely that you are lost with the crew of the ship; and that suspicion may be enough to keep him out of our hands. So, then, I want you to tell me where, and under what conditions, you were to meet Yen How to-night."

"I can hardly say exactly," she replied; "he is in a house by itself near the shore."

"Is he alone?"

"They told me that there was hardly anyone with him."

"There is a single light just ahead of us in shore: is that the place, do you know?"

"It may be, sir; I should think it would be. I cannot say."

Hardy jumped sharply up and called "Brassey!" in a shout that made him cough.

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Brassey at once appeared—a beardless, Cockney-looking man.

"How far are we in?" asked Hardy.

"About a quarter of a mile, sir."

"No lights on board showing?"

"No, sir."

"Pick three men to go with you and me in the boat; ask if they can shoot at all, and give them the pistols; better look to yours and mine. Tell them to stop speed. And find me at once, Brassey, a pair of scissors, if you can."

On a side-table in the cabin were pens, ink, and paper. Hardy sat and wrote a few words; and almost as soon as he had finished Brassey was at his side with a pair of scissors.

Hardy at once hurried across to where Ada Seward sat; he muttered:

"If you do not mind—just one little lock. . . ."

Before she knew, he had clipped a tendril of her light-reddish hair. He had ever a conspicuous lack of ceremony when at work *pro bono publico*.

He returned now to the table, and inclosed the hair with the scribbled sheet in an envelope, which he directed: "Yen How, Europe."

On the sheet he had written: "From John Hardy to Yen How,

"Hair of Miss Seward, who is in the safe keeping of John Hardy, at 11a, Cavendish Square, London."

A few minutes later, wrapped to his ears in a long black ulster, he was at the tiller of a boat making for the shore.

The sea was calm, and only a slow, swinging *bruit* from the breaker-line informed with its murmurous monotone the very drear and dark night.

The air was stagnant as the vapid atmosphere of some dead world. It seemed pervaded by a certain visible gloom.

In ten mintes, Hardy, with a spring, was upon Chinese territory. The three men put off again a little from land: Brassy stationed himself on the wet sand, instructed how to act in case of a preconcerted signal; alone Hardy moved forward.

He had in one hand the letter, and in the other a pistol.

Yonder shining steadily through the murky dark was a light, which seemed nearer than it was; half a mile along the East stretch of fine sand lay Rosendaël, but invisible, deserted. The noise of Dunkirk could not be heard, but a blurred hint of luminosity marked its situation. A stone's throw away, on the left, stood a row of five bathing machines. The upward-tending region of sand-hill and dune behind the villa was lost in gloom.

Yet the near was not invisible. Hardy, having passed the broad band of level sand, was able to make his way with tolerable precision among the knolls, and light, uneven ground. Once he collided with a low, back-less bench, half sunken askew into a scraggy growth of grass; once and again he stumbled into a hole of sand.

The house was very far. It stood on a slightly raised plateau of firmer ground, facing the sea; and the light seen from the sea was in an open window near the ground. The house was white, and small; its doors and windows Gothic.

He stole stooping up to the window, and looked in. The room, lighted by a lamp, was a species of *salon*. On a chair in a corner burnt a Chinese lantern.

From a window on the right side also he saw ooze a radiance from within, and with cautious tread he approached it also. The casement was latticed, and sparsely overgrown with some bind-weed. But he was able to observe that the room was gaudily decorated, tapestried with green and crimson silks, in the centre a spread table, laden with fruit and plate of gold. A multitude of coloured lanterns made it a nest of variegated glamours. And here, busy about the table, he saw two richly-dressed Chinese.

He made the tour of the house, and saw no other living thing. All was dead silence and stagnation. He came back to the front window, dropped in the letter directed to Yen How, and turned away.

His way now was downhill, and he walked faster, with less precaution, swinging freely along. He had gone on in this way for perhaps five minutes, when he stopped suddenly short, all eyes and ears. He had heard the distinct sound of footsteps near.

In two or three seconds the muzzle of a pistol was at his forehead, and the muzzle of his pistol was at the forehead of a man.

They peered closely into each other's face.

"Well, you do not fire, and I will not," said the man coolly.

He was not an Englishman—something in his intonation showed that; yet he spoke English.

He had recognised Hardy; but Hardy did not recognise him.

"Is it agreed?" the man said.

"Well."

"Drop your pistol."

"You drop yours."

"And you promise?"

"Yes."

There was a thud on the ground, and a moment after another.

"Poh! You have lost your chance," said the man.

Then Hardy knew Yen.

Even though it was a totally different Yen to the pompous, pig-tailed Arch-Priest, the great Apostle, who had been awaiting, with restless wanderings over the dunes, his tarrying bride. It was a Yen in simple English clothes, with a hard felt hat over his bald forehead, and without *queue* behind.

(To be continued.)

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE
OF
Mr. GLADSTONE.

By One Who Knew Him.

The longest and most exhaustive article on the subject ever written appears in THE SUNDAY READER of June 4th.

It is an article of unparalleled interest, and should be read by all.

DO NOT MISS IT. *DO NOT MISS IT.*

ONE PENNY. THE SUNDAY READER. ONE PENNY.

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25 Prizes of Handsome Books.
25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.

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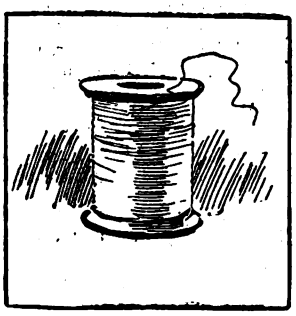
BELOW will be found eight pictures. Each one depicts the name of some place, or ship, or man associated with the combatants in the Hispano-American War. Five sets of these pictures will be published. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep all the sets by you until we ask you to send them in.

The daily newspapers will give you the best help in discovering solutions, as most of the names depicted have already appeared in the press.

LEADER.



No. 25.....

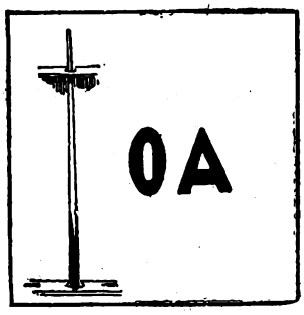
WARSHIP.

No. 26.....

PLACE.

No. 27.....

PLACE



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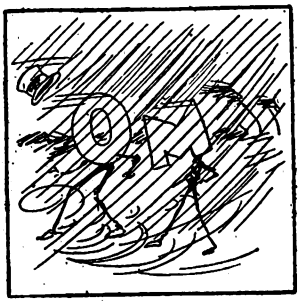
WARSHIP.



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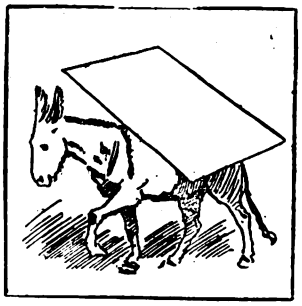

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WAR COMPETITION.

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THE CANOE BUILDER'S RUSE.

THE Snohomish River, gathering up the Skykomish and the Snoqualimie, and all the river children within her arms, rushes down the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains and mingles her turbulent waters with the salty tides of Puget Sound just where Chuh-tlahks, the One-with-the-Nose-of-Stone, juts his bold and rugged bluff out into the clear, cold, and mingled waters.

Long before the white man had set his foot upon the land, the Sdohobsch (Snohomish) had dwelt about the mouth of this mighty river which now bears their name.

Among these quiet and peaceable fisher folk two brothers of the tribe dwelt together. One, though in every sense a man, was small and weak beside his brother. This other was a very giant in strength, though a lamb in mood, and his lithe, supple form shot upward for full six straight feet or more.

And so it came about that this hardy Hercules of the western wilds followed the chase, while his weaker brother became a hewer of wood and a builder of canoes.

All the day long you might hear the "pee-yah-kud" (hand-adze) singing tuck-tuck-tuck-tuck as Dus-py-yuk on the beach sent it eating its way into the heart of the cedar that was to become a canoe. And all the live-long day Dus-sluh-hobe ranged the forest, for he was a hunter, bold and brave and daring.

He was wild and roving, and often spent whole days trailing the bear or the deer deep within the forest. Or perhaps he might embark in his light canoe, seeking that king of fish—the salmon. And if luck favoured him he might, perchance, steal upon a hair seal unawares, and gain at once both food and raiment. What a feast they had then in the "ah-lahl" (house) as their friends dined with them!

In time Dus-py-yuk took unto himself a wife to sit beside him, but Dus-sluh-hobe remained unwed. In due season children also came to Dus-py-yuk—many children, and they made the sands of the beach merry all the day long with their laughter and their childish pranks.

But merrier still did they make the heart of the lone Dus-sluh-hobe, and the thoughts of the hungry little ones and their glistening eyes more than once drove the winged shaft truer to its home within the breast of the bear.

Day by day the bond between the two brothers grew stronger; and stronger still the bond of love between the children and the lone one. But the jealous wife fumed with wrath to find her will weighing naught against that of the brother.

Hour by hour the mischief brooded in her breast, until she began to plan her revenge upon her unsuspecting and beneficent kinsman. Sleep sat lightly on her eyelids at nights, and her mind was full of evil thoughts.

As ill fortune would have it, it so chanced that Dus-py-yuk was now called away each day to build a great war canoe some distance down the beach, where the wind with its unseen knife had felled a great cedar that was ripe for the touch of the "pee-yah-kud." This was his wife's opportunity.

Our evil fortunes often come to us in the guise of good, and perhaps that is why Dus-sluh-hobe became unusually successful in his search, for he came back daily loaded with spoil from the chase. The jealous wife did not tell her husband of his brother's great kindnesses to them as they talked together at night and at odd moments in the morning. She had other plans! During the day she herself ate greedily of all that was brought by the brotherly huntsman; but gave the children little or nothing to eat, though the very odour of the feast which they had not tasted sharpened the pangs of hunger.

All through the evening and the night she poured

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into the unwilling ears of her spouse many stories of the wicked greed and selfishness of the brother, and pointed to the half-starved children to vouch for the truth of her lies. Alas for Dus-py-yuk! How eager was his wish to disbelieve these evil things—how often did he refute them as the idle tales of an idle woman. But the children—he might disbelieve the woman—could he disbelieve his own eyes?

Alas! It is the constant washing of the sea that eats into the heart of the hardest rock and undermines it at last. So in time it could not fail but that his wife's tales should have some effect even upon the great love of Dus-py-yuk for his brother.

He became sad and moody. Was he not good and kind to his brother? Why should he treat him so? Were they not bound by the strong bonds of blood? Could any be stronger?

A trouble brooded over loses nothing in the brooding, and the tiny seed of suspicion planted by the woman, sunned and watered by the man's own mood, was not long in putting forth a luxuriant growth, till finally both man and wife were brooding to the same end: how they could rid themselves of the brother.

Dus-py-yuk bethought himself. He was a man of great skill in the use of the "pee-yah-kud." Did he not fashion for his daughter that wooden bear that would roll his tongue? Did he not make for his son that wooden seal that swam upon the water like life?

A seal? Ah!

To the woods he went and built, not canoes, but a seal—a seal like that which he had made for Sta-bill, but larger—and more life-like; for his seal should know how to do all that a seal should do—to swim, to dive, to bark—upon this he pledged all his skill.

After many days his task was done, and the wooden seal was all that his fancy had imagined it. It was nearly time for the full moon, and when Sdoqualb should grow great in the heavens he would go out when the tide was low and place his seal upon the seal rock. Then, when the tide came in, the seal should call his brother to his doom as surely as the darkness follows the night.

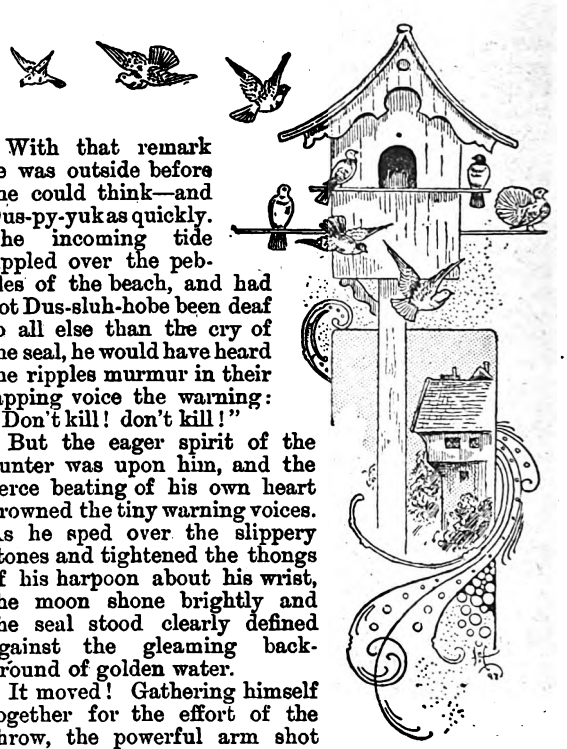
It was the time of the full moon, and the tide was rushing far out. A dark form moved cautiously along the beach here and there, from shadow to shadow, and at last to the seal rock itself. Soon the seal appeared perched high upon its rocky crest, though there was no water near at hand. Again might the dark form be seen working its way cautiously back, till it disappeared in the blackness of the forest that fringed the shore.

Dus-py-yuk returned to the "ah-lahl" as though from his daily labour, and Dus-sluh-hobe welcomed him—thrice welcomed he—asking him anxiously as to the cause of his delay. At the sound of the cheery voice Dus-py-yuk's heart became lighter, though weighted down with its dark secret of death. But the heart of the wife sank within her breast, for she thought her spouse would fail her at the critical moment.

The cheerfulness of the one drove moodiness far away from the heart of the other, until Dus-py-yuk completely forgot his plot. Suddenly a short, hoarse bark smote the air, and they sprang to their feet with one impulse. Dus-py-yuk, quickly regaining himself, spoke first.

"A seal, my brother—it's only a seal!"

"Yes, a seal," responded Dus-sluh-hobe, "but a seal with such a voice means food for days, and clothes for the little ones all the winter long! Ah, my Bright Cheeks, my little one, do you not want a new skirt of sealskin? You shall have it! It waits for you on the beach already!"



With that remark he was outside before one could think—and Dus-py-yuk as quickly. The incoming tide rippled over the pebbles of the beach, and had not Dus-sluh-hobe been deaf to all else than the cry of the seal, he would have heard the ripples murmur in their lapping voice the warning: "Don't kill! don't kill!"

But the eager spirit of the hunter was upon him, and the fierce beating of his own heart drowned the tiny warning voices. As he sped over the slippery stones and tightened the thongs of his harpoon about his wrist, the moon shone brightly and the seal stood clearly defined against the gleaming background of golden water.

It moved! Gathering himself together for the effort of the throw, the powerful arm shot out, launching the weapon like a writhing snake, hurtling through the air. He listened—a thud—was it a groan?—and a splash, almost simultaneously, told him that his javelin had found its mark. Quicker than it takes to tell it, the line sank through space and tightened, and the thong began to cut deeper into the flesh—such a seal!

Instantly he found himself being dragged seawards over the beach, where the prattling of tiny surf still murmured mournfully: "Don't kill! Don't kill!" Moments were precious. Dus-sluh-hobe felt at his belt for his knife—it was gone. It was never away from him—where could it be? Then in the agony of his heart he knew that death stared him in the face.

Bright Cheeks called to know if he was bringing her the skirt—alas! He would never see the little ones more. He turned to his brother, who had turned to fly; but at the sound of the despairing voice his feet faltered beneath his weight. He could not leave his brother to his fate—surely the bonds of blood are stronger than those of evil desire!

He turned and caught one glimpse of a face full of brotherly love—he saw a swiftly vanishing form—he heard a great splash; then the tiny patter of falling spray, like an echo. And then there came wafted to him a gurgling greeting.

"Farewell, oh, my brother! I go to the other land! Farewell!"

In a moment the surging tide of hatred had ebbed from the heart of Dus-py-yuk, as he beheld his once-beloved brother going to his doom through the hand of him who should have given shield and shelter, instead of murder. A flood tide of remorse rushed into his being, sweeping resistless over the thought of his wicked wife, and burying her in oblivion for ever.

With a cry of encouragement he dashed after his brother. Despair lent him strength. He swam towards

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the tiny speck so rapidly disappearing. Superhuman energy sent the phosphorescent water in long streamers of light from his wildly-beating arms. Swiftly he swam, as never before, yet slowly indeed did he draw upon his brother.

At last, nearly dead from his efforts, he overtook the receding form, and clung to it madly, wrapping a portion of the thong about himself.

Together and half unconscious they were dragged away at a great speed, too great to be able to free themselves. For days and for nights the relentless and unfeeling creation of Dus-py-yuk's hands towed and dragged its living freight, creator and victim alike. They passed by strange countries and over unknown seas.

Day by day they grew more chilled, until they reached the land of the "Kway-kwus-sty-bue" (Esquimaux)—the land where the men are all short like children, broad and shaggy like a bear and equally as strong. And there they found themselves free from the seal.

Here they saw a peculiar man with a canoe, and he was fishing, but in a manner hitherto unknown to them. He had neither net nor line, nor bait with which to snare the fish—nothing save his own two hands. As they watched him, they saw him dive under the water, and bring up a fish in his hands.

The brothers watched in great astonishment at the sight. They were quite hungry. As they had not eaten for a long time, the sight of a boat half full of fish made them feel still more keenly the pangs of hunger. But they were afraid of the man. Finally hunger conquered fear, and as the little man went under in another plunge they swam rapidly to the canoe, each stole a fish and returned to shore with it.

Again and again they repeated the trick till they had no fear of hunger for some days to come.

But, alas! their hunger was greater than their discretion, and had betrayed them; for the little man noticed the rapid disappearance of his fish, and flew into a violent rage, which grew greater and greater as he sought for the culprits. He was terrible to behold. Could he not hear their very teeth clack together in fright? Could he not see the very ground itself shake with their quaking?

When at last he chanced upon the stealers of his fish, he vented his wrath upon them in abundant measure. He made the brothers his slaves, and took them home to his people to do the duties of bondsmen.

Long and wearily they worked out the days of their bondage in the land of the "Kway-kwus-sty-bue," till their hearts grew sick for a sight of the groves of fir and cedar at home, and till they grew hungry for a taste of salmon, deer, or grouse. At last, after a weary, weary service, they managed to escape from their taskmaster, but, alas! home was far away, and many miles of ocean rolled between them and it. They must swim back the way they had been brought.

Days passed, and nights passed. They saw strange lands, and the sun grew warmer. The longer they swam the easier it became to swim, and the more they liked it. Then they thought of the years since they had left both home and people, and how their friends must be dead and gone to the other land. Why should they return to a land that would now be strange to them?

So they resolved to become whales, the great swimmers, and swim always. And they became whales and learnt to swim much faster. But though they did not return as men, the bond of blood is strong; they could not forget their people, and so each year they return to Chuh-tlahks, driving the flying schools of salmon before them. And the racks of Chuh-tlahks are red with the drying fish, the very air is oily and heavy with the odour, and the hearts of the Sdohobsch are glad because of the salmon, and glad because the Sdohobsch have not utterly forgotten their own.

And when the salmon are few, when the nets are drawn in empty, and the hearts of the fishers fail even of hope, then the brothers, the whales, rush upon the frightened fish with open mouth; right and left they dash, driving whole schools of salmon upon the beach that their people may have no lack of food.

And so it happens that the teepees of the Sdohobsch are filled with food, and the bleak winter season passes by, and hunger touches them not with its gaunt hand.

GERALD BLAKE.

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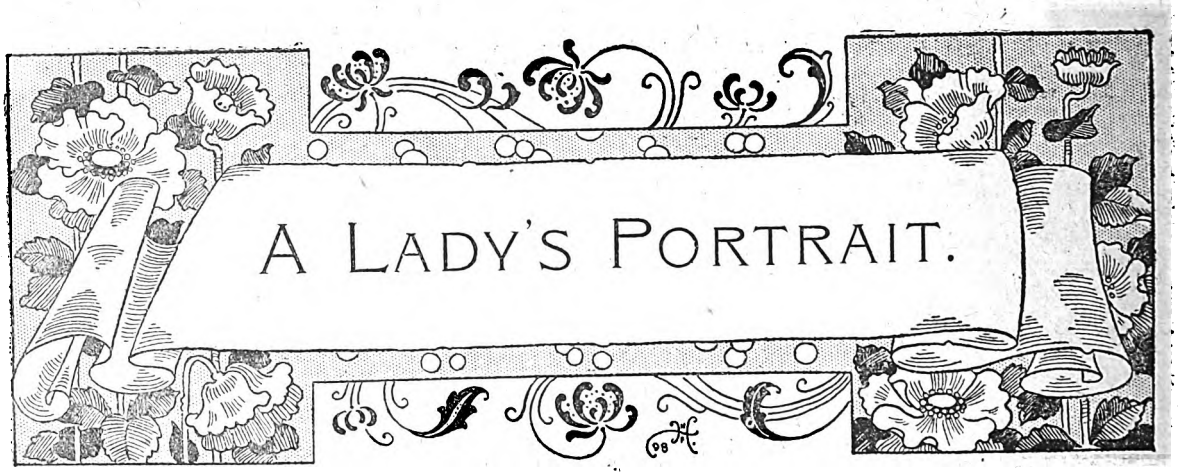

A LADY'S PORTRAIT.

I FELT on very good terms with myself that summer evening as I sat at the window which overlooked the Rue MoMahon, idly smoking and building many a visionary "*Château en Espagne.*" Had not my first important picture, the "Portrait of a Lady," been accepted by the Paris Salon? Had not the critics, notoriously good judges of painting, spoken highly of it? Was it to be wondered at that my modesty for once sank into the background, and that hope spoke kindly in my ears?

My pleasing reflections were interrupted by the entrance of a servant, bearing a letter. I observed, to my surprise, that the seal bore the coat of arms of the Montcour family, which, as all the world knows, boasts a lineal descent from Charlemagne. The Marquis de Montcour I had often heard of as a strong partisan of the Bourbons, but otherwise I knew nothing concerning him. What could be the subject of his letter to me? I opened it and read as follows:

Château Montcour,
June 1st.

The Marquis de Montcour presents his compliments to M. Albert Morton, whose address he has learnt at the Salon. M. Morton would be conferring a favour on the Marquis if he would paint for him the portrait of a member of the Montcour family, and would name his own price for doing so. In the event of this request being acceded to, the Marquis would be glad to receive M. Morton as his guest during the painting of the portrait. M. Morton will be pleased to receive the assurances, &c.

My delight can be well imagined. I had secured an influential art patron, other commissions would inevitably follow, and my future success was certain.

So I scribbled off an acceptance of the Marquis's offer and went to bed with a light heart.

A day later I received a second letter from the Marquis, informing me that his carriage would wait upon me at a given hour, in order to convey me to the Château. It did not take long to pack my bag, and at the time appointed I drove off in the Montcour equipage. After an hour's drive I found that we were in the outskirts of Paris, and seemed to be making for the open country. In another half-hour, the magnificent pair of bays slackened speed, and the carriage drove through the gateway and into the grounds of the Château.

I was told that the Marquis would be glad to see me in his study at my earliest convenience. He was a man of about fifty-five years of age, tall, and well formed. To describe the iron-grey hair, the rigid moustache, the piercing black eyes, would be an easy task; but no words could give an adequate idea of the intense hauteur which shone in every line of his countenance, and was to be remarked in every movement of his body. The man was an incarnation of pride.

After the usual polite inquiries, the Marquis, who, by the way, spoke excellent English, requested me to be seated.

"I am sorry," he said, "to have to trouble you in the first place by confiding a family secret to your keeping. This may seem a strange proceeding on my part, but you will see the necessity of it when I explain. The portrait I wish you to paint is that of my only daughter, Héloise. I have chosen you as the artist because you are an Englishman—a foreigner—and, therefore, there will be less likelihood of my secret being divulged. Will you give me your word as a gentleman and a man of honour, to reveal nothing that I may tell you, or that you may learn while in the Château?"

"Marquis," I replied, "your request is easily acceded to."

"I thank you, monsieur," resumed the Marquis, bowing gravely. "The facts of the case then are as follows. My daughter Héloise, of whom I am passionately fond, has for some time given the greatest uneasiness on account of the eccentricity of her behaviour, and has now, I regret to say, developed symptoms of positive insanity. Acting on a physician's advice, I have reluctantly resolved to place her in a lunatic asylum, where, of course, she will receive the best possible attention. You may imagine for yourself what a grief this has been to me, monsieur."

Indeed, it was very evident from the Marquis's whole bearing and from the slight vibration in his voice, that his iron soul was shaken within him, and I marvelled to see the curtain of pride drawn aside for one quivering moment from the recesses of his heart. He sat silent for a minute or two; then resolutely clenching his hand, he was himself again.

"It shall be given out that my daughter has taken the veil and entered the convent of St. Ursula in Paris. Thus will our family pride be saved."

"Is your daughter's insanity very noticeable?" I ventured to remark.

"I am sorry to say that I have been obliged to place her under restraint. She cannot be allowed, on any account, to leave the apartments which have been allotted to her. I wish," continued he, "to have a

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faithful portrait of my daughter as she is now, before the demon of insanity has completely obtained possession of her.

"Your hours for painting will be from ten to twelve in the morning, and from three to four in the afternoon. Four days from this, Héloise will be removed to the asylum. Is the time too short for you?"

"No, Marquis," I replied, "I think I may promise you that the portrait shall be completed by the end of the fourth day."

"Many thanks, monsieur. A small suite of rooms has been reserved for your use, and you will find your stay in the Château not, I hope, unpleasant."

I thanked the Marquis, and was then conducted to my apartments, where I found supper awaiting me. A valet had been allotted to my use, and I saw that the lines had indeed fallen to me in pleasant places. To my palate, used to *vin ordinaire*, the Ammontilado of the Château was a revelation. An excellent brand of cigars was provided for me, and the latest novels stood uncut upon the shelves of the bookcase. I went to sleep that night wishing that my old comrades of the Latin Quarter could but have seen me, "nursed in the lap of luxury!"

Next day I was conducted to the western wing of the building. I was astonished to find that the young lady's rooms, like my own, were situated in the topmost story, but, remembering the nature of her affliction, I judged that she had been placed here for the purpose of seclusion.

Yet another surprise awaited me, for on reaching the door which led to the suite, I saw, seated on a chair, with his back to the entrance, a gigantic negro. François, my valet, *pro tem*, spoke a few words to him in a low tone, and then directed me to go straight forward.

The negro carefully shut the door after me, and I found myself alone in a corridor with several rooms opening from it. At one of these doors appeared an attendant, a stern, forbidding-looking woman, who at once invited me to enter her charge's apartment.

My first hasty glance as I stepped forward revealed to me the fact that the boudoir, for such it was, was furnished with every luxury. The furniture was dainty, the curtains unique, and my footfall on the carpet was as noiseless as on a bank of moss.

The young lady was sitting in the cushioned seat of the bay-window, looking out over the wide prospect. At my entrance she turned languidly round, and the nurse, who spoke in French, introduced me to her. I commenced the usual banalities about the weather. To my surprise, Mademoiselle de Montcour answered me, as her father had done, in English. Then recollecting my business, I said:

"May I hope that you will sit to me this morning?"

"Yes," she replied in a sad, far-away voice; "if you wish."

Accordingly I erected my portable easel, and then began the task of posing my model. She was as wax in my hands, holding her head listlessly in any position I pleased. Finally everything was arranged to my satisfaction, and the sitting commenced.

My clumsy words can hardly pretend to describe Mademoiselle de Montcour's appearance. She was, let it be said, of medium height, and slender. Her hair was dark and luxuriant, her exquisite features were thrown into relief by the pallor of her cheeks, and her sad eyes looked out like stars of the night. I mentally compared her to a proud, pure lily, which some ruthless wind has utterly crushed and beaten to earth.

I went to bed that night in a very restless state of mind, and the reason was this: Throughout the day, as was natural, I had been on the look-out for signs of insanity in my beautiful model, and had observed her very closely for that purpose. But not the slightest trace of insanity could I find. She was languid, and intensely sad; but that was all.

Was it possible that the doctor had been mistaken? Could it be that she was the victim of foul play? Yet I could not but own that the emotion in her father's voice had been real and unaffected. I was completely puzzled, and, with a vague sense that something was wrong somewhere, tossed about from side to side, till at length I dropped into a troubled sleep.

Next day I was up betimes, and was at the corridor-door waiting for admittance, a few minutes before the clock struck ten. I saw nothing of the nurse, so I knocked at the door of the boudoir. The voice of Mademoiselle de Montcour bade me enter. I went into the room, and never shall I forget the change which came over the girl's face when she saw that I was alone. The listless expression fled, and in the place of it I saw surprise, fear, and agitated hope depicted on her features. Clasping her hands imploringly she whispered:

"I am not insane! Do not believe it! Oh, save me, save me!"

And as I looked into her eyes, clear with the light of reason, my doubts melted away, and I would have staked my life that she was not mad.

"Do you believe me, monsieur?" she asked entreatingly. "You can see I am telling you the truth, can you not?"

"Yes, yes," I stammered; "but—your father——"

"Oh," she said; "let me tell you quickly, or that woman will be here. My father loves me, but he would rather that I should die, that he himself should die, than that the Montcours should be humbled. But it happened one year ago—ah, how can I tell you, monsieur?" (and at this point a delicate rose-bloom invaded the white field of her cheeks) "that I met a gentleman, good, noble, and true, and—I loved him. But he was poor and of humble birth, and my father drove him from the Château when he asked for my hand. I was forbidden to breathe his name or to think of him any more.

"Then my father went even further, and descended to threats; but I, monsieur, am of the Montcours, and I, too, have my share of pride, so I determined that nothing should make me promise to forget my lover. At last my father, with tears in his eyes, told me that if I did not give up Alphonse unreservedly, he would take this last awful step. Oh, monsieur, save me, save me, for I vow that I am nearly driven into madness when I think of it."

"But—the physician?" I said, with a most uncomfortable lump in my throat at the sight of her grief.

"The physician?" she repeated scornfully. "Have you never found what money will do? I am so helpless; I have no friend, but you have a good face, monsieur, and I trust you."

At this moment the nurse entered hurriedly, and the conversation was of necessity interrupted.

Before entering the boudoir again in the afternoon, I wrote on a slip of paper the words: "What is his address?" This slip I folded up together with a small black-lead pencil into as little compass as possible, and

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contrived to slip it into Mademoiselle's hand while posing her for the afternoon's sitting. I gave her several intervals for rest during the progress of my work, and she employed the time well, for, as I posed her for the last time, I felt something pressed into my hand, and I knew that my inquiry had been answered.

When I had finished for the day, I hastened to my room, and eagerly examined the paper. On it were written the words: "M. Alphonse Perret, 26, Rue Lamartine, Paris." I at once sat down, scribbled a few lines to this address, and managed to get my letter posted without arousing suspicion.

But the hardest part of the task was to get Mademoiselle de Montcour out of what was virtually her prison. For hours I sat brooding over this problem, but no solution seemed forthcoming.

At last I resolved to go to bed, and, perhaps, in the morning some happy inspiration might come to me. But sleep felt a thousand miles away, and, putting on my dressing-gown, I sank into an easy chair, and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. Strangely enough, it was from the ceiling that I derived the idea which afterwards matured into a successful plan.

Almost above my head was a trap-door, opening, in all probability, on the leads. A thought flashed into my mind, and I soon had the dressing-table moved to the necessary position, and, placing a chair upon it, forced open the trap-door, hoisted myself up, and emerged upon the roof of the Château. It was of irregular construction, and I found progress rather difficult.

Keeping the geography of the house well in mind, I contrived to pilot myself to that part of the roof which I judged would cover Mademoiselle's apartments. Then I lay flat down, and, at the imminent risk of my neck, peered over the edge.

Taking a piece of string out of my pocket, I fastened my penknife to it, and lowered it down till it was opposite the window. I had to risk the chance of the nurse being in the same room, and I began swinging the knife slowly backwards and forwards.

Presently I heard it tapping against the window, at first gently, and then louder and louder. An anxious minute passed, and then I could hear the sound of the window being raised, and I saw a head looking out. It was too dark for me to distinguish the face, but Mademoiselle de Montcour's voice was not easily mistaken.

"Who is there?" she whispered.

"It is I, your friend," I answered softly.

"*Mon Dieu*, you will kill yourself, Monsieur! what can you be doing there?"

"Listen," I said, "to my plan for your escape. I have written to your lover telling him to be at the gate the night after next with three swift horses. At half-past eight you will hear my knife tapping at your window again. Then I will let down a rope to you, and we must get you pulled up here somehow or other, and the rest will be fairly easy, I fancy."

"Oh, Monsieur, how can I thank you? I feel free already, but—but—it is impossible for me to get to the roof. I should be killed."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," I replied unceremoniously. "I'll see about that part of the business; so you must not worry about it."

"I cannot but trust in the only friend I possess," she answered, and was just about to say something else, when some sound alarmed her, and she hastily drew in her head and closed the window.

I made the best of my way back to my own room, and, tired out by my day's work, slept the sleep of the just.

Next day, I kept my eyes sharply about me, and was rewarded by seeing a long rope in one of the outhouses. I contrived, by wrapping the rope round my body, and buttoning my coat tightly above it, to get it smuggled up to my room. I now breathed more freely.

I held no further communication with Mademoiselle de Montcour, but was able to inform the Marquis that the portrait would be ready by the next evening.

The hours seemed to creep by with incredible slowness.

At last, however, the eventful night arrived, and early in the evening I handed over the portrait to the Marquis, and received my cheque.

Then I went to my bedroom, and locked myself in. How often I looked at my watch I cannot tell, but at length, to my great relief, I discovered that it was half-past eight o'clock. Taking the rope with me, I mounted once more upon the table and chair, and emerged upon the roof. Luckily there was enough light for my purpose, and I walked cautiously to my post above Mademoiselle's window. I cut the rope into two equal parts, and made a number of knots in one of the pieces. Then I firmly fastened the end of each rope to a chimney-stack immediately behind me. Lowering my penknife, I tapped at the window as before. Mademoiselle de Montcour opened it at once.

"Courage!" I said softly. "You will soon be safe. I will tell you just what you are to do, and I depend on your bravery as my chief assistance."

"Oh! I dare not, I dare not," she moaned. "I shall become giddy and fall."

"Nonsense, you will do nothing of the sort. It will be impossible for you to fall if you obey my orders. Come, Mademoiselle, shall it be said that a Montcour was afraid?"

"No," she said impulsively; "tell me what to do, and I will do it."

"Bravely spoken. I now lower two ropes to you, one of which is knotted. Fasten both firmly round your body, under the arms; seize the knotted rope and pull yourself up, hand over hand, with all your strength. I will pull the other rope, and we shall have you here in no time. Do you understand?"

"Yes," answered she.

My instructions were obeyed, and at my signal she mounted upon the window-ledge. I pulled with all my strength, bracing myself against a small battlement which bordered the roof. The brave girl assisted herself as well as she could, but the strain on my muscles was something fearful. The sweat poured down my face, my brain seemed on fire, and my eyes appeared to be wrenching themselves from their sockets.

At length my strength was fairly exhausted; but I clenched my teeth in despair and rage, and by one superhuman effort managed to drag Mademoiselle into safety. The instant the intolerable strain was relaxed I fell down, fainting, and it was not for some minutes that I was able to get on my feet again. Mademoiselle de Montcour, though feeling rather sick and giddy, was not much the worse for her adventure, so we were soon safe in my room. I produced my travelling flask, and we each had a small glass of brandy, which restored us to our natural selves.

The clock struck nine, so there was no time to be lost. We took off our boots, and crept stealthily along the passages and down the stairs towards the side entrance. Once I thought I heard a footstep behind us,

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but could see nobody. The stairs creaked in a most alarming fashion, and my heart was in my mouth half the time.

I opened the door, and Mademoiselle passed through, and at once ran towards the wall which surrounded the grounds of the Château. Taking the key, I was about to lock the door from the outside, when I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder. I turned round, and was confronted by the huge form of the negro. His face wore a malicious grin. He seized me by the collar, and I closed with him desperately. I was lucky enough to get a firm hold, and we swayed to and fro; the negro exerting his tremendous strength in the endeavour to throw me, and I trying all I knew to keep my feet.

Fortunately, my antagonist disdained to shout for aid, so we struggled savagely together, the silence being only broken by our quick gasps for breath. I still felt the effects of my earlier struggle, and I knew that in another minute I should be thrown to the ground. The negro's grinning face was near my own, and I could feel his hot breath upon my neck, when suddenly I remembered a wrestling trick which I had once learnt from a Cumberland man. I had just strength enough to put it into practice, and the negro, taking in the snare, fell heavily to the ground, still encircling me in his arms.

As he fell, his head struck the stone step with great force, and, thick as his skull was, he was knocked insensible for some seconds. I raised myself from the ground, and ran as quickly as I could towards the wall. A man who was seated on the top called eagerly in French:

"This way, monsieur; the lady is already over."

By his assistance I was soon in the high road, where I found Mademoiselle de Montcour mounted on a spirited steed. The negro had evidently recovered, for we heard voices shouting, and it was evident that the alarm had been raised in the Château. We sprang quickly to the saddle, and dashed along the road at full speed, till the home of the Montcours was a dark speck in the distance.

When we reached Paris, M. Perret, for he it was, proposed that we should ride at once to the house of his mother, who would take charge of Mademoiselle, and they could then be married quietly in the morning.

So we parted, with many expressions of good-will and gratitude on the part of the happy pair. As for me—well, I had the cheque to assist in consoling me, and I went cheerfully through the silent streets to my lodgings, happy in this, that I had done my duty as "a gentleman, and a man of honour," to quote the words of the Marquis de Montcour.

W. Francis.

The Count's Wooing.

Count Adrien Mac Trevor, notwithstanding his Scotch name, was a Frenchman, and a Parisian at that. In the face of aristocratic prejudices, his grandfather had made a fortune in the iron trade. Adrien's father had continued the business, and had been able to leave to his son an enormous fortune, together with a spotless escutcheon.

The count had passed the first years of his life in the pursuit of pleasure; but now he had decided to marry and settle down. Desirable matches were not lacking, but courage was. "Women are such enigmas," he argued, "that one can never tell how the affair will turn out."

He was too intelligent to want a simpleton, and too honourable to want a coquette. The time for romance was over with him, and he desired to make his married life a charming reality. To sit opposite him at his fireside he pictured a gentle companion, refined and sincere, with enough elegance to make his home brilliant, and enough culture to make it respected. He asked a great deal, it is true, but as Fate had ever kindly smiled upon him, he still relied upon her.

This degenerate Parisian, while not believing in women, still believed in a woman. Beneath the surface of a social sea, swarming with life of all kinds, he knew there were pearls waiting to be discovered.

All the winter long Adrien had waltzed with blushing damsels, who responded to every smile bestowed upon them by this young man who was declared by mammas to be a "splendid catch!"

At a grand ball given by a Russian banker he had met Mdlle. Clary Bernard, a veritable "queen of hearts." She was a dainty blonde with brilliant black eyes, who dressed perfectly, mingled words from all languages in her conversation, and made a display of artistic tastes and aristocratic pretensions. She had a superb dowry, too, and it seemed as if Adrien need look no farther.

He hesitated, however, as his fastidious taste was not quite satisfied. Mdlle Clary prided herself on being a descendant of the great Samuel Bernard, and made this a pretext for covering her fans, her handkerchiefs, everything she owned in fact, with the coat-of-arms of the celebrated financier. She was thoroughly informed of everything pertaining to him, and she missed no opportunity of displaying her historical knowledge when she discussed the Regency.

Adrien wished the fans and historical notions at the bottom of the sea, along with Samuel and the Regency. He liked nobility, but not that sort of nobility. His good sense led him to repudiate everything not established on a solid basis.

At a charity concert given by the Duchess de Coutances, he was listlessly looking on when he chanced to hear some remarks exchanged by two young girls near him. What they said did not interest him, but the voice of one of them went straight to his heart. It was so clear, it was so correctly modulated that it suggested the music of a running brook. He turned and looked at the young girl whose melodious accents

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so aroused him. She did not seem to be very beautiful; she was tall, fair as a lily, with shining auburn hair twisted close to her shapely head, an oval face and eyes like Greuze's "Girl with a Broken Pitcher."

He inquired who she was and learnt that the angelic voice belonged to Mdlle. Marie d'Aspremont, one of the most aristocratic young ladies of the noble Faubourg.

A moderate fortune, no mother, a host of little brothers and sisters to whom she was devoted, a rigid education, a good heart and fair intellect; these were the facts he learnt concerning the young lady. He secured an introduction to the family.

The Marquise d'Aspremont invited him to her Thursday reception. At precisely nine o'clock he rang the bell at the entrance of the modest mansion where the old marquise resided.

A servant in English livery showed him into the drawing-room, which to his surprise he found furnished in true Louis XIV. style. Nothing was lacking. The Marquis, having been obliged to sell a family seat, had reproduced in his Parisian home the room of his grandfather, a colonel under Louis XIV. On the grey woodwork with white carvings, medallions by noted artists stood out in relief. The large easy chairs, with high backs of gilded wood, were covered with royal blue silk brocaded with silver. The sun-shaped clock with its Apollo borne on four marble pyramids had marked the hours, sad and joyous, for two centuries. X-shaped seats, covered with sapphire velvet, reminded one of the presentations of duchesses.

Tea was served on a Boule table crusted with copper and silver which was worthy of the great Condé.

Near the fire-place was seated a priest with violet hose who was addressed as "Monseigneur." Mme. la Marquise d'Aspremont sat facing him. She appeared to be a good enough person, though abrupt of speech. She wore a cap of old point lace surmounted by two immense grey butterflies, and a plum-coloured dress of China silk. She discussed all known topics without reserve and with that simplicity which calls "a spade a spade."

The company consisted of two other elderly ladies, an Academician, an old general, a young man from the provinces who had nothing to say, the grandnephews of the Marquise, her son, and Marie hemmed in by a crowd of youngsters. The lady who had introduced Adrien was the only Parisian present.

She had dined with the Marquise; and as soon as Adrien arrived she tried to entice Marie away from an exciting game with the children. The girl waited until it was ended, then reluctantly entered the circle of grown-up people.

It was absolutely impossible, however, to draw her into conversation. With her dress of grey wool, her white guimpe, and her great cross, she resembled a "tableau vivant" of a pupil of the Saint Cyr school. Timidity and embarrassment were stamped upon her countenance. She had the appearance of one who would like to sink out of sight. It puzzled Adrien to imagine what they could have told her about him to frighten her so.

Was she unsophisticated or stupid? A little of both, the young man decided. She was asked to play, and at once obeyed; but never was ear vexed by so many false notes. In the midst of this brilliant execution she suddenly stopped, saying:

"I fear I have forgotten the rest."

"It seems that you have forgotten it all, Marie," said her grandmother, "and that you forgot it before you began."

At this the girl rose and excused herself, saying that she would return when the children were asleep.

On passing out, she caught her feet in the scarf of one of the ladies, picked it up awkwardly, and disappeared. Even her silvery voice had changed, and Adrien no longer felt the spell of its music. As may be readily imagined, she was seen no more that evening.

The next night Adrien danced several times with Mdlle. Clary Bernard, took a flower from her bouquet, and saw, as in a dream, the crest of the great Samuel on her fan. The day after he called on the friend who wished to see him marry the descendant of the old nobility, thanked her for the intended honour, but also informed her that he needed a little more brilliancy in his abode.

"I do not pretend that Marie is a Mme. de Sévigne, but you should not judge of her intelligence by a single interview. I believe that if you were married to her you would never regret it. Call again and give her a fair trial."

"Thanks, but a life trial would be too long."

"Well, give her a fortnight's grace. It must not be said that you refused her on account of a nocturne badly played and a scarf awkwardly picked up."

Against his will, Count Mac Trevor went to the Marquise's the following Thursday. The same experience awaited him, no music this time, no awkwardness, but the same inexplicable silence.

The Marquise and her friends filled the evening with conversation on two equally edifying topics: the corruption of the age and genealogies.

"A young girl must be kept a child," repeated the dowager, "else she will not be worthy of becoming a woman."

Marie broke the silence which enveloped her only to ask Adrien to buy tickets for a charity fête in which she was to take part.

On returning home, he found a perfumed envelope containing tickets for the same fête, where Mdlle. Clary Bernard was also to shine. Decidedly, matters were growing interesting! Adrien could well understand the fair Bernard would be charming, but how about the little girl in the grey gown?

* * * * *

The gaiety of the fête was at its height when Count Mac Trevor entered the grounds where it was held.

The trees were hung with many-coloured lanterns, which shed their soft rays on the happy crowd. The military band, the joyous shouts of children, the creaking wheels of fortune, the eloquence of Punch and Judy, the gay chatter, all made parts of a symphony round him; and with a blonde marquise in heliotrope selling American beverages on one side, and a duchess offering him flowers on the other, Adrien found it no easy task to make his way about.

Called here by a smile, detained there by a pair of lovely eyes, he at last reached a "tombola" where a foreign princess was chatting with true Parisian wit.

Suddenly a shrill voice said close behind him.

"A cigar, sir?"

Turning, he recognised the triumphant Clary in the garb of a shepherdess; white gauze spotted with red, a large hat trimmed with white plumes and red pompons, a long sash of floating ribbons, a silver chatelaine sus-

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pended from her girdle, and a little apron trimmed with dainty lace.

Adrien gave a hundred francs for a cigar and followed the fair merchant.

She offered her wares right and left, all the while rebuking him for his tardiness.

He looked at her with some perplexity. She did not quite come up to his expectations.

Something in her manner, the coquettish tossing of her head, betrayed an affectation which jarred on her admirer's artistic nature. Then the little forced laugh that took the place of words displeased him. That silly laugh betrayed the embarrassment of vanity seeking in an empty brain for ideas, and finding nothing.

Just then Adrien found himself near a wheel of fortune behind which was the friend who had introduced him to Mdlle. d'Aspremont. Marie was with her.

The girl's simple toilette consisted of a skirt of white woollen stuff, a high white bodice embroidered with silver, the high collar and sleeves trimmed after the Valois fashion. A toque of white straw, trimmed with great blue wings, completed the resemblance to a maid of honour of the court of Charles IX.

"Does one win every time, mademoiselle?"

The silvery voice said so many appropriate and pleasing things in reply that Adrian stood rooted to the spot in astonishment. Gold pieces fell like drops of rain in the little platter. In the excitement of her charitable endeavours the girl was no longer recognisable. The woman was foreshadowed, and such a woman! The blue-bird had broken its shell and was already spreading its wing for flight!

Adrien had drawn back, fearing lest his presence might silence this babbling brook.

When she at last noticed a gentleman near her wheel she said without a trace of embarrassment:

"And for you, sir, shall it be green, red, or blue?"

"Does one win every time?"

"Certainly, sir. Anything you wish! Even he who loses, wins, you see."

"I would prefer one of your roses."

"But they are very dear."

"How much?"

"Just as much as you are willing to give."

"They are dear, that is true, but no amount is too great to pay for your smile!"

And Adrien emptied his purse into the platter.

A scarlet flush spread over her sweet face and she could only murmur:

"Thanks!"

* * * * *

Adrien married Marie.

During their wanderings in Italy, as he listened to her appreciative discussion of works of art, the wealth of information possessed by the quiet girl astonished him!

Kissing her little hand he exclaimed:

"To think that I believed you stupid!"

"Oh, you see, in our circle, girls are taught not to talk. They fill our minds with treasures, then lock them up and leave it to a husband to find the secret of the lock."

"It seems that the key was found at the charity fête."

"That was because I saw you and sent some one to aid you."

"Who?"

"Love."

JEAN DOMBEY.

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THE RIVAL QUEENS.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE RETOLD FROM THE FRENCH BY MARY FERMOR.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

CHAPTER XXV.

Mahmoud-el-Reis Keeps his Promise.

"To the Castle of Étampes!" shouted Antoine Cadocu who had, with small ceremony, hoisted Madame Agnes up into the saddle in front of him. Without further delay they started off, accompanied by an escort of twelve Free Lances, who carried with them, as a prisoner, the crafty clerk, Maître Samson. They crossed the river by the ferry that had brought back the empty litter of poor Agnes the Fair, and made their way rapidly towards the forest.

Agnes de Méranie's heart was ready to burst with rage and mortification at the ignominious way in which she had been deprived of her expected triumph, but she recognised her master in the rough soldier whose prisoner she evidently was, and hoped by a semblance of submission to temporise till an opportunity for vengeance should offer itself to her.

"The Castle of Étampes belongs to Lord Amaury Montruel, does it not?" she asked, when she heard their destination.

"Amaury Montruel is dead, and the castle belongs to Captain Antoine Cadocu," was the answer; which made her hopes fall considerably lower, though she kept her own counsel, and the darkness concealed the hot burning tears that rose to her eyes.

"To the Castle of Étampes!" shouted Antoine Cadocu.

The clocks of the city were striking the first stroke of midnight, and the solemn Mass was about to begin.

The tumult and excitement caused by the abduction of Madame Agnes, and the apparently accidental death of Amaury Montruel, had drawn off the attention of the crowd from recent arrivals in the Cathedral; but when people had once more time to look round, a striking pair was found in the vicinity of the King. One was a woman, closely veiled, but wearing a crown and royal, gold-embroidered mantle. Her companion was a man dressed in the full richness of a magnificent Saracen costume.

As soon as they noticed her, Albret, Eric and Eve all left their places and hurried to her side, forgetful of all else than that they saw her whom they had begun to mourn as dead.

The Saracen advanced leading Ingeburge by the hand, and bowing low before Philip Augustus, said in a clear voice:

"The hour of midnight is striking, King, and I alone survive of the nine assassins who were pledged to take your life. Now fulfil your promise, as I have fulfilled mine."

The King advanced and took the trembling hand of Ingeburge from that of the Saracen, and as he raised her veil a shout of jubilation rang through the building, for they recognised the fair face and delicate beauty of the long lost Queen.

Philip bent down and kissed her forehead tenderly, and if his conscience smote him for this tardy reparation, his heart was full of thankfulness that she had been restored to him in time.

He then led her to the Altar, where they knelt side by side as he uttered the following words:

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The King took the trembling hand of Ingeburge.

"This is my wife in thy sight, O Lord God."

Then rising, they turned to the people and he proclaimed solemnly.

"From henceforth love and reverence Ingeburge as your Queen."

The Lord Bishop of Orvietto, Legate of his Holiness Pope Innocent III., did not at all approve of this summary settlement of affairs in which he and his compeers were allowed no share. He was looking round in search of someone upon whom to vent his righteous indignation, when his eye fell upon the striking, and somewhat incongruous figure of Mahmoud-el-Reis. He strode towards him, saying haughtily:

"Infidel! How dare you defile this sacred edifice by your presence! What brings you here?"

"I came to seek instruction for Holy Baptism, and to abjure my former errors, Sir Legate," replied the Syrian, unabashed, and, it must be confessed, with decided satisfaction, as he saw the crestfallen way in which the proud Bishop retired to his seat, muttering:

"This must be inquired into. It is some profane joke, I fear!"

Though Ingeburge had been in some measure prepared for the sudden and happy change in her lot by the confident, if somewhat vague, assertions of the Syrian during the time she had been under his care, she felt so overwhelmed by this new-found joy, that the King almost feared she had suffered too much at his hands ever to shake off the effects of her long imprisonment, and the terrible experience on the last night of her stay at the Abbey St. Martin.

When, however, they had reached the Louvre after the long and trying ordeal, her spirits rose, and her eyes gleamed with their depth of love and tenderness, and when with gentle diffidence she would have thanked her lord for this realisation of her dearest hopes, he took her in his arms and said with deep emotion:

"How can I ever atone for all you have suffered at my hands? Your countrymen rightly call you 'Angel' and you have been my guardian angel. I owe my life to you, and, perchance, my soul's welfare. If Heaven will spare me that life, I swear it shall be devoted to making you forget the dreary past."

Within the next few days the Council released the kingdom from the Interdict, Philip Augustus was publicly reconciled to the Church and his marriage with Queen Ingeburge ratified at a service of general thanksgiving. Mahmoud-el-Reis was received as a catechumen by Bishop Maurice de Sully, who was thus compensated by the exchange of a living stone for the spiritual temple in place of the lifeless image that had fulfilled so gruesome a destiny.

Albret and Eve were married soon after, and both retained their places in the love and confidence of the royal pair. Eric returned to his northern home after seeing his little sister and Queen Angel secure in their well-deserved happiness.

Maître Samson paid the price for his double dealing with his ill-favoured head the day after his master had come by his awful end, for King Philip thought it advisable to dispense with the services of even so able and subtle an agent, in consideration of his tendency to try and serve two masters.

State affairs did not suffer the reunited King and Queen to remain long together, for he had to take the field against his ever-turbulent enemy John of England, and in this campaign he was again accompanied by Captain Antoine Cadocu, who performed acts of prowess and valour that would have done credit to our own King Richard himself.

During his absence he left Madame Agnes under the care of "La Fontanelle," whose experience in the management of her sex he had reason to admire. The lot of the deposed favourite was a very bitter one. Upon her arrival at the Castle of Etampes she had been received by Catherine, Alix and Jeanne, her three successful rivals in the nocturnal competition at the St. Landry tavern, and they had promptly

He took her in his arms.

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He kissed it reverently.

taken possession of the jewels and rich clothing that she had donned so proudly that morning, giving her in exchange some left-off garments of their own. She was then bidden to wait on her new master at his supper, and when she showed signs of resistance, he found summary means of reducing her to submission. She was kept in close confinement, and never allowed to move without one of the three attendant maidens at her side. It may safely be assumed that they lost no opportunity of humiliating and torturing the wretched woman who had once stood so far above them. The bitterest drop in her cup was the knowledge of her hated rival's restoration and the constant reports that reached her of Ingeburge's growing popularity. Had it not been that she still cherished plans of revenge, she would have taken her own life rather than submit to the hourly indignities she had to endure.

Cadocu had told her that the King was fully aware both of her visit to him at the tavern and of her intrigues with Amaury Montruel, so that she knew he would never forgive the deceit she had practised upon him. Appeal to such a one was worse than useless. Montruel, her slave and plaything, was dead—as she had more than once wished him—but now she reviled the ill-fate that had removed the one man who would have stood by her in her disgrace. No thought of sorrow or pity for his untimely end ever crossed her mind, she only felt a sense of mad, selfish anger at losing her forbearing and ever ready friend, just at a time when she had no one to replace him.

How she longed, too, for those costly pearls she had wasted upon that faithless Mahmoud-el-Reis, who, instead of killing her rival, had worked the destruction of those who had employed him! If she only had had money or jewels she might have bribed someone to let her out of this ghostly castle, haunted by the vision of her murdered namesake who had thought to be its mistress, and of the man who had received it as a token of affection from the King he had so basely betrayed.

Her dazzling beauty faded, and her companions did not fail to tell her so; the fires of hatred and revenge burnt within her till she seemed like a shadow of her former self. With hollow cheeks and sunken eyes she wandered restlessly about, or sat moodily gnawing her nails and refusing either to speak or eat.

The war, or rather the campaign, was brought to a successful termination, and Philip Augustus went with his Queen Ingeburge in state to Nôtre Dame to return thanks for his safe home-coming. Just as the Queen descended from her litter, a woman, dressed in the ragged remains of tawdry finery, darted forward with an uplifted knife in one hand ready to strike Ingeburge as she passed. The King stepped between them, knocked the weapon from the woman's wasted hand, and bade his guards seize her.

With a cry of impotent rage she fastened herself upon his arm, saying wildly:

"Have you forgotten your wife, Agnes de Méranie? A malediction upon that white-faced witch who stole you from me! She never loved you as I did, and she shall not live to enjoy what I——"

Her sentence was never finished, for the mob had closed in at the sound of her name, and, before the guards could secure her, she had fallen a victim to the violence of the populace.

Cadocu expressed the deepest regret that she should have thus thrust herself upon his royal master, but explained that for some time past she had been much more docile, and in apparently such bad health, that he had ordered their vigilance to be relaxed. He now understood how deep had been her duplicity, but felt a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that she had but hastened her own end by it.

The day after this tragic episode Mahmoud-el-Reis, to call him by his old familiar name, was baptised in Nôtre Dame by Bishop Maurice de Sully in the presence of the King and Queen. After the ceremony he accompanied them back to the Louvre, and took leave of the many friends he had made at court, including the Queen's private chaplain, good Prior Anselm, as well as Eve and Albret, whose dread and hatred had speedily been turned into love and admiration when they knew the noble part he had played on behalf of Queen Angel.

The King and Ingeburge accompanied him to the door, where his magnificent Arab was in charge of the two black slaves.

Having taken leave of Philip Augustus, who would even now have persuaded him to remain amongst them, he turned to Ingeburge. With tears in her eyes she held out her hand to him.

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He kissed it reverently and pressed it to his heart for some seconds. His full, rich voice trembled slightly as he said:

"Adieu, Queen! I leave you happy. God grant you may long continue so! I go now to Dilah, your twin soul, to teach her the lesson that you have taught me. Pray for us that we may both stand fast, and for our souls, that they may rest in peace."

He turned away, and with one more look at the woman who had so strangely affected his destiny, he dashed over the draw-bridge and was soon lost in a cloud of dust.

"There goes one of the noblest men that ever breathed," said Philip gravely; to which Ingeburge added in a low voice:

"And it is to him, under Heaven, that we owe our happiness, my dear lord. Would that his own had not been sacrificed to procure it!"

* * * * *

Months passed and there came news of a hideous tragedy in the Far East. Mahmoud-el-Reis, faithful to the last, returned and accomplished his self-imposed mission. Before presenting himself to the authorities, he sought out Dilah in the shady groves of Pur, and told her the strange story of his broken vow, and of the wondrous truths he had learnt from the lips of her twin soul. His love and burning zeal, now transferred with increased intensity to his new-found faith, soon worked as he desired upon the gentle heart of Dilah, and when she had declared herself willing to stand by his side in death, as she had hoped to do in life, he signed her brow with the cross and they went forth together.

Unflinchingly the two faithful hearts bore the double penalty accorded to their two-fold crime of apostasy and treachery.

Their torture was extended to twenty-four hours instead of twelve, and the only earthly consolation Mahmoud-el-Reis had in that terrible time, was the knowledge that the soul of his beloved had passed hence before the fangs of the tiger could reach her body.

THE END.

A Splendid New Serial Story, entitled "THE GLADIATOR; A Tale of Eastern Empire," will begin shortly.

AN OLD WOMAN'S LOVE.

THE Marquis Dizios, first secretary of the Spanish legation, was a man still in the prime of life, with great personal advantages and a most distinguished presence.

He was as popular socially as he was successful diplomatically.

No little informal dinner, indeed no festivity of any kind, large or small, was deemed complete without the presence of "that delightful Dizios."

Ladies in the most exclusive circles of fashion had lionised him to an extent that came near to making him hated by his own sex in the capital. Yet he never indulged in any flirtation or showed preference for any particular woman; and the smiles of the younger ladies failed to make the desired impression upon him.

He was dining at his club, one evening, with the only intimate friend he had made since his appointment.

A certain Arnold Hemingsen by name, an *attaché* of the Swedish legation; a charming fellow in his way, but the very opposite to Dizios. As they were finishing their coffee and lighting their cigars, the conversation turned upon women.

The Marquis' manner instantly changed, he grew cold and reserved, and merely answered in monosyllables.

Hemingsen generally respected his friend's peculiarity, although his interest had always been more or less piqued by the marquis' invariable taciturnity regarding the fair sex; to-night, however, he was in a more reckless mood than usual, whether it was owing to the exhilarating effects of an excellent meal, or to a generous absorption of the "rosy" to quote from Mr. Dick Swiveller's classic phraseology, I really could not say.

After staring at Dizios thoughtfully for a moment, while he turned his cigar carefully round between his lips and puffed a short white cloud into the air, he unburdened his mind by bluntly asking his friend how it happened that so popular a man as himself should never have found one lady fairer than the rest?

The marquis was more surprised than angered by his friend's crude curiosity, and only replied after a moment's hesitation.

"My dear Hemingsen," he said, "there is a story connected with my aversion to flirtation, in the ancient as well as in the modern sense of the word, which, if you care to hear it, will define my antipathy to that species of society sport better than any explanation I could offer you. It is rather long though, and some other time——"

"No, no," interrupted Hemingsen, whose face expressed the liveliest interest, "don't bother about its length. Let us hear it now."

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"Well," said the Spaniard, "this is what happened, and as the heroine of the one love affair of my life has been dead now for many years, I may, still with profound respect for her memory, tell you the story.

"I had been spending a few weeks of my leave, one summer, with my mother, in Spain, and as I was about to start for Paris, she begged me to make a stay at Poictiers in order to visit her dear friend, the Duchesse d'Ormont, who was living in her chateau not far from that town. She lived in great seclusion, owing to the death of her only daughter.

"I will not deny that the idea bored me immensely, but as I wished to please my mother above all things, I carefully concealed my annoyance, and vowed, at the same time, to make myself as agreeable as possible to her friend.

"My mother wrote the Duchesse of my approaching visit, and when I alighted from the train, I found a brake waiting to convey me to the castle; it was drawn by a pair of the most splendid thoroughbreds that I have ever seen, and I never wearied of admiring their action during the drive.

"The Duchesse received me at the foot of the grand stair-case. She was very simply dressed in the deepest mourning, without a single ornament of any kind to relieve its austerity save for one ring, a magnificent ruby which I noticed upon her finger as I raised it to my lips. To my surprise she blushed as I did so, but instantly controlling herself, she welcomed me in an almost regal fashion; indeed, I have never been more impressed by so curious a mixture of simplicity and grandeur.

"Perplexed by that curious blush, a sudden mischievous idea of paying a little court to the poor lady entered my foolish brain. I would show her, I thought, the same flattering attention which a young man would offer a young and beautiful woman of exalted rank whom he admired: that is to say, with a carefully blended mixture of deference and gallantry.

"For the first half hour our conversation never deviated from subjects relating to my mother, of whom the Duchesse seemed very fond, for she asked many questions concerning her health and her life in Spain; she thanked me, too, very graciously for coming so far out of my way to see her, and begged me to consider myself quite at home at the castle during my visit.

"'When you know the dinner hour your lesson will be learnt,' she said with a charming smile. 'Pray arrange your day to suit yourself, choose your own horses at your ease; the country round is celebrated for its views, and I am sure you will find many places of interest to visit before leaving.'

"I answered with energy that I had come to see her and her alone, and I begged her not to deprive me of her society for the few days I was to remain.

"She blushed again! And to hide her confusion gave her nephew (who, I had forgotten to mention, was present at my reception) instructions to escort me round the park and show me the lake and the flower gardens, of which, she added, she was very proud.

"The Duchesse, who was innately gracious, promptly consented to be my guide herself when I warmly urged her to grant me that favour, and donning a large hat, she led the way out upon the terrace. The view across the park was very fine.

"The velvety green lawns felt softer than Persian carpets beneath our feet, as we paced slowly along side by side under the spreading elm trees to the lake; the gentle breeze hardly rippled its placid surface as we followed the walk which ran round it; while the greedy swans glided hopefully along beside us, fluttering their wings and clapping with their bills—in other words begging us in 'swan talk' for some favour in the way of biscuits or bread-crumbs.

"I persevered of course, in my endeavours to entertain my hostess and finally succeeded in making her laugh; for up to that moment her demeanour had been grave, almost stern.

"As our promenade was drawing to a close and we were returning through the flower garden, we paused simultaneously before a beautiful jasmine in full bloom. After inhaling its fragrance for an instant I begged her very humbly and almost in a whisper to make me a buttonhole of the blossoms.

"'How capricious you are,' she returned smiling, while her supple fingers cleverly twisted a few leaves and buds into a little bunch which she placed in the lapel of my coat. 'That is my favourite flower, too,' she added, raising her sweet eyes to mine; but she dropped them again hurriedly as they met my gaze.

"Just what she read in my eyes, I do not know—admiration possibly, a tenderness of some sort, surely, to which she was unaccustomed. For I myself felt the magnetism as our glances crossed and we retraced our steps in silence.

"The following days were spent in a constant and ideal companionship. We drove about the country during the day and our evenings were passed upon the terrace, or in the great bow-window of the drawing-room, which overlooked the park.

"But our relations grew equivocal. I was dissatisfied with myself and my behaviour; and each day as it dawned, I vowed should end my visit.

"But I still lingered on. There was a fascination about our intercourse which was hard to resist.

"Although her hand had never pressed mine more warmly than on the day of my arrival, I felt that I had made an impression upon her never to be effaced and, alas! my conjecture proved only too true.

"I decided to leave the chateau one Sunday morning, while she was attending divine service in the beautiful chapel which formed the left wing of the castle. I had no heart to bid her farewell, so I left a note, excusing my abrupt departure and thanking her for the gracious hospitality which she had extended to me.

* * * * *

"One year from that day her body was found floating in the lovely lake round whose grassy margin she had strolled with me but a twelvemonth before!"

He paused and then went on hurriedly.

"In her will she left me as a keepsake the ruby ring which I have already mentioned."

"Ah!" murmured Hemingsen, "I have often admired it; indeed, it seems a part of you, for I have never seen you without it."

The marquis smiled sadly.

"Now you know, my dear Hemingsen," he said, "the story of my one love affair and my repugnance to any semblance of false sentiment!"

"But," interrupted his friend eagerly, "do you really think her love for you drove her to——?"

Dizios laid his hand heavily on the young man's arm.

"The Duchesse," he said, "was over sixty years old!"

Alice Henderson.

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

C. W.—The speed of transmission of overland telephone wires is at the rate of 16,000 miles a second. Where the wires are through cables under the sea the speed is not more than 6,020 miles a second.

H. wants to know if it is permissible for a town council to choose a mayor outside their own body.———Certainly, and it is very often done.

With reference to a paragraph that appeared on this page a week or two ago regarding the cost of clothing our soldiers and sailors, One of the Sailors writes to say that although Tommy Atkins gets all his clothes provided for him by the country, the sailors have to pay for their own. A sailor has to keep his kit up to the uniform standard in quality and quantity, which comprises about forty items. Should E. S. or any other reader wish to know the cost of these, O. O. T. S. will be glad to supply them with it.

Contango.—Mr. Edison, the American inventor, is not blind, as your friend states. It is true that he is deaf, however, and this calamity was caused by a railway porter having lifted him up by the ears when a boy.

Author.—The biggest fortune ever made by a man solely by his pen was the quarter of a million made by Sir Walter Scott, while probably the single work which brought in the largest sum for its author was Monsieur Daudet's "Sapho," for which he received £40,000.

B. B.—Only pure spring water is absolutely free from alcohol. River, sea, and snow-water all contain more or less.

Walter is in an unenviable position. To use his own words, he is "madly in love with a beautiful girl." Unfortunately, his affection is not returned in the same degree, although the young lady admits that she "likes him," but not sufficiently to become his wife. He continues to press his suit on the grounds that his own devotion will in the end win hers after marriage. The lady in question does not agree with him in this theory, and declines to risk it. Being of a persevering disposition, he asks if we cannot say something which would induce her to change her mind. ———I am afraid not, Walter. In our opinion the lady is quite right; it would be an exceedingly risky thing to do. Of course, it is just possible that such a marriage would turn out happily, but the chances are against it.

G. C. H.—It is by no means an unusual thing for a sovereign never to go through the ceremony of coronation. Neither the Emperor of Germany, the King of Italy, the present and late Kings of Spain, the King of Bavaria, nor the King of Saxony have ever been crowned.

W. H.—The ostrich is the swiftest moving animal on the face of the earth; it has been known to travel at the rate of a mile a minute, a speed equal to that of our fastest trains.

Whiskers writes: "Do you consider a beard an advantage or disadvantage in business?"———The present is undoubtedly an age of young men. In every department of life it is the young men who are most in evidence. It would appear then to be rather a disadvantage than otherwise to be the possessor of a beard, for it invariably makes a man look several years older than his clean-shaven contemporaries, and he is therefore apt to be pushed aside as being less smart than they are. But after all, it cannot make much difference in the long run, for if a man has his wits about him, the fact will assert itself, be he clean shaven or the owner of a beard.

Populous.—At the beginning of the present century there were only twenty-one towns in Europe with a population of more than 100,000.

Six Footer asks: "Where are the tallest men in Great Britain to be found?"———From statistics it appears that the inhabitants of Galloway are on an average taller than the rest of their countrymen; the average height in that part being 5ft. 10½in., without shoes. The average for the whole of England being only 5ft. 6⅔in.

Gardener wants to know why orchids command such fancy prices.——— Probably because their culture is a fashionable craze, together with the existing mania for securing new and rare varieties.

Canary.—The original inhabitants of the Canary Islands have completely disappeared; that is the result of contact with Spanish civilisation. Their mummies are to be found hidden away in holes that honeycomb the mountains. Among the people of that extinct race were so-called communities of women; they lived in an agglomeration of cells, after the manner of the early Christians of Egypt. The remains of one of the singular convents exist on the slope of a mountain on the Grand Canary; there are 300 cells cut out of the solid rock, and on such a slope that only a mountaineer can reach them.

H. M.—The crown of the King of Roumania is made of metal from the cannon captured by the Roumanians at Plevna in 1877.

C. H. L. asks: "When were the first lucifer matches made?"———In the year 1829. These matches, however, were not lit by striking, the wooden splits were headed with a composition of sulphur, sugar and chlorate of potash. They had to be dipped into fuming sulphuric acid to light them; the acid was kept on asbestos in a bottle. Striking matches first made their appearance in 1832, and were lighted by rubbing their heads on sandpaper, usually by drawing them sharply through a fold of the paper between the finger and thumb.

C. Y.—The only Lady Mayoress entitled to wear a chain of office is the wife of the Lord Mayor of York.

Waters writes: "It would interest me greatly if you could give me some idea of the advance our Navy has made since the time of the Spanish Armada."———At the time of the Spanish Armada our very largest vessel was not more than 1,000 tons, and required a crew of 500 men, whereas a vessel to-day of 15,000 tons only requires an additional 250. In 1598 the most popular form of cannon was the "culverin," weighing about two tons, and capable of firing a fifteen-pound shot every ten or twelve minutes, whereas nowadays a modern gun cannon is capable of discharging seven or eight tons of metal every minute. In fact, the only point of resemblance between the fleet of 1598 and the fleet of 1898 is that both are manned with British sailors.

W. W.—The ordinary fog as distinguished from the "London particular" is caused by the condensation of atmospheric vapour, owing to the presence of cold. Fogs, therefore, more frequently occur at those seasons of the year when there is the greatest variation of temperature during the day. In large cities, such as London, these white mists become impregnated with smoke and assume the pea-soup colour.

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No. 493. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 11TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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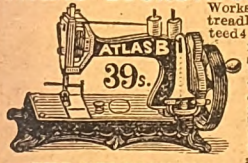

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SHORT STORIES

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A Dangerous Flirtation.

CHAPTER I.

"Cousin Mark, I must have that lovely spray of honeysuckle!"

"You have but to command, Cousin Sybil!" pulling up the chestnut mare in the lee of an old, moss-grown wall, over which a honeysuckle threw a reckless profusion of blossom.

They made a very pretty picture of Dignity and Impudence. The girl, with her piquant face and imperious outstretched hand, formed such a striking contrast to the man, whose stern profile and massive shoulders were eminently suggestive of quiet strength. Besides, the girl was in the first bloom of womanhood, while the streaks of grey on the man's temples showed his age to be nearer forty than thirty.

"I suppose you know it is a question of stolen goods, Sybil? Suppose, when we are calling, I betray you to the Heathcotes?"

"But I am not going to call—at least, not to-day."

"Sybil, you forget you promised my mother."

"Oh, well," resignedly, "I suppose I must go; but I wish Miss Heathcote and her brother were not such uninteresting old frumps," she added discontentedly, as the dog-cart drew up in front of an old two-storeyed house, half cottage, half bungalow.

"Master is out, but Miss Heathcote and Master Richard are in the garden," said the rosy-cheeked maid. "Will you walk this way, please?" ushering them through the low French window on to a verandah amply supplied with chairs.

"What a garden! I never saw anything so lovely," cried Sybil, gazing admiringly at the wilderness of flowers. Roses were everywhere—climbing up the pillars of the verandah, standing primly on bushes, or rioting in the wildest profusion over a rickety summer-house. No sound disturbed the drowsy summer silence save the hum of countless bees, till, suddenly, there came from the direction of the summer-house the clear sound of a woman's voice—"Dick, how dare

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you! Give it back to me this moment, you little wretch!" —then a rush, and a boy ran quickly down the garden, followed closely by a girl in a white dress. Up and down and in and out they raced, the boy brandishing an envelope above his head, the girl, flushed and panting, demanding its immediate surrender. They were utterly unconscious of spectators, till suddenly the boy doubled down a side path which brought him face to face with the group on the verandah. A moment later came Bee, flushed and panting, her white dress upheld in one hand, while with the other she was evidently trying to secure her loosened hairpins. At sight of the visitors Dick dropped the envelope, and, with a murmured exclamation of "Great Scott!" disappeared like a flash, while Bee went forward to greet her visitors with as much calmness as she could assume, while conscious of missing hairpins and flaming cheeks.

"Cousin Mark, Bee is delightful!" was Sybil's verdict as they were driving home an hour later, "and I mean to flirt desperately with the fossil brother and Dick."

"Do you?" said Mark smiling. "Then I hope you will be merciful as you are strong. And, by the way, Sybil, talking of flirting, I wish you would be careful how you treat Mr. Sebastian. You know I don't object to a little innocent flirtation, but with Mr. Sebastian it won't do; the game is too risky—he—he might think you meant it."

"And supposing I did?" glancing sideways at Mark's rather stern profile.

"Sybil!"

"Well!" petulantly, "one must have some excitement in this dull place, and Mr. Sebastian is handsome and a gentleman."

"Oh, yes, he's handsome enough, and he's a gentleman in a way, of course."

"But if he is only a gentleman 'in a way,' why did you have him here?"

"My dear girl, a man may be an excellent manager of a mine without being the sort of fellow one would like one's womenfolk to—er—er—"

"To carry on a desperate flirtation with?"

"Precisely; so I hope you will see the advisability of checking anything of that sort on Sebastian's part."

Sybil's big blue eyes scanned Mark's face with a curiously intent expression, as she said gently, "Do you care whether I flirt with Mr. Sebastian, cousin Mark?"

"My dear girl, of course I care. Haven't I just been explaining that one's womenfolk——"

"Oh, bother, there isn't time for a sermon; we are ten minutes late already," and without waiting for her cousin's assistance, Sybil jumped from the cart, ran lightly up the shallow steps of the Manor, and disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

Sybil had organised a picnic—"just as a mild protest against the general dullness of the neighbourhood, my dear," she had explained to Bee, with whom her friendship had advanced by leaps and bounds during the past six weeks. This was how it was that Bee found herself sitting with Sir Mark Rainford under the cool shade of the beeches in Eversham woods.

"I had no idea picnics were such pleasant affairs," said Mark, "and to think Mr. Heathcote was nearly depriving you of all this;" waving a comprehensive hand in the direction of the green aisles and dappled sunlight, "'for the sake of those old Egyptian buffers' as Dick so aptly puts it."

"Oh, you musn't blame George, he is so near the end of his second volume, you know."

"H'm, I see; ah, well, I suppose we old folks are all apt to be a little selfish."

"Do you consider yourself George's contemporary, Sir Mark?"

"Well, perhaps not exactly that. You see I haven't found an equivalent for the Egyptians yet, but I've no doubt I'm tending that way. By the way, Miss Heathcote, I often wonder at that calm, contented air of yours, which seems to ask nothing more of life than what you have—and yet——"

"And yet?"

"Well, somehow I had imagined a more eventful history for the enthusiastic, fiery little girl I left—let me see—how many years ago?"

"Thirteen," said Bee quietly, "thirteen this month."

"Not really?" sighing, "ah, yes, I remember it was in September. We were in the orchard and you had on a grey frock, and your fleece of hair shone in the sun when you gave me—something I valued very much; can you imagine what it was?"

"Something that I gave you before you went away?" raising a pair of questioning grey eyes.

"You don't remember?—Miss Heathcote—ah, I see you have not quite forgotten," watching the delicate pink flush mantle in Bee's cheeks in answer to his look.

"Oh, yes," the blush deepening, "but you must remember I was a very sentimental little girl, and, besides, it was such a long time ago."

"Yes, it was a long time ago," repeated Mark, idly plucking a handful of moss, "and now I have grown old."

"How absurd, a man of forty-five is in the prime of life!"

"Perhaps, in a sense; but he is too old for some things, nevertheless—for love, for instance."

"Is one ever too old for love?" murmured Bee dreamily.

"Miss Heathcote!—Bee!" eagerly, "do you think it possible that—but no! What have I to offer a young girl in exchange for her youth and love? Why, these grey hairs," passing his hand wearily over his whitened temples, "ought to have taught me more sense; and Sybil——"

The pink flush had gone from Bee's face, and it looked singularly white and drawn as she rose from her mossy seat and said, in a measured voice: "I'm sure you exaggerate your disadvantages, Sir Mark; many women would be quite willing to overlook your grey hairs."

"Perhaps; but supposing she has a fancy for someone else? Someone who knows how to write impassioned love letters, for instance?" glancing keenly at Bee's averted profile.

"A girl has many fancies, but they do not often last. After all," with a sad little smile, "what we women most crave for is the steady, honest love of a man—one tires of impassioned love letters when they are just the outcome of one's own love of excitement."

"Then you really think ——" making an eager step forward.

"That you must be patient and trust to time, Sir Mark."

"Time!"

"Time, indeed!" echoed a shrill voice just above Bee's head, "a nice idea you seem to have of it, Bee!

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You and Sybil promised to help Mrs. Mayfield with the tea at five o'clock, and I left her a moment ago simply raging because it was a quarter past, and neither of you had turned up!"

"Oh, Dick, I'm so sorry, I'll go at once. Have you any idea where Sybil is?"

"Sybil! Oh, she is mooning about with that Spanish chap in a boat on the mere."

Mark drew his brows together in a sudden frown as he murmured something about the chances of a thunderstorm, and strode off in the direction of the mere.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTNIGHT later Bee was listlessly gathering a few late roses, when she caught sight of Dick limping painfully down the garden path.

"Bee—Bee," he called in evident excitement, and his face looked singularly white and scared as Bee hurried to meet him.

"Dick, what is it?" anxiously, "have you hurt your knee again?"

"Yes, beastly nuisance—slipped as I was getting down Forwood's Bank. But never mind about my knee," sinking into a garden seat and wiping the perspiration from his white face, "that can be seen to presently."

"But, Dick——"

"Now, don't worry, old girl; I know what to do all right, and there is something much more important to think of just now.

"You remember my telling you about Sir Mark's row with the Spanish chap on the day of the picnic, when he annoyed Sybil and said she had led him on to think she cared for him, or some rot of that kind; and when Sybil told him she cared more for Sir Mark's little finger than Sebastian's whole worthless carcase, how he behaved like a chap in a melodrama, and swore that Sir Mark should never marry Sybil?"

"Yes, yes, I remember," acquiesced Bee eagerly.

"I told you at the time that I didn't like the look of Sebastian when Sir Mark appeared on the scene, and after a tremendous row, suggested the manager sending in his resignation. Sebastian looked murderous, simply murderous; but I thought it was only a way these excitable foreigners have—until to-day," added Dick, almost in a whisper.

"Dick, what do you mean?" cried Bee, in a voice tense with anxiety.

"I'll tell you, but you mustn't interrupt me, old girl, for we have no time to waste," said Dick quietly. "Sir Mark came back from London last night, and was down at the mine this afternoon—they are sinking the new shaft, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know—go on."

"Well, Sir Mark told Mr. Sebastian that he wished to inspect the shaft this afternoon with the new manager. He said he might be a little late, but Sebastian could dismiss the men as usual, just keeping Barlow in the engine-room to work the cage. Sebastian answered in as few words as possible, and then turned on his heel and went back to his office. Sir Mark called me up just as he was getting into the dog cart, and asked me to tell Sebastian that he would be back about six o'clock to go down the shaft. I went to the office and knocked, but got no answer. So I just peeped through the pane of the inner office and saw——"

"What, Dick, what?" cried Bee in an agony of impatience.

"The Spanish chap on his knees by the safe, carefully examining what looked like—like a bomb—a dynamite bomb!" said Dick in a half whisper, as he wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"Dick, you must have been mistaken."

"No, I wasn't, I've seen scores of pictures of those things, and, besides, the Spanish chap was muttering something about 'That finishing Sir Mark's business for him; once down the shaft and then it would be easy——'"

"Dick, how horrible! Of course, you warned old Barlow and——"

"No, I just came up here. I thought the shortest way would be to meet Sir Mark on his way from Ringley, then there need be no fuss, you know.

"Then I slipped down that confounded bank, and had hard work to get here. However, if you hurry, old girl, you'll be in plenty of time. Thank Heaven it's a straight road, so you can't miss him. You will hurry, won't you, Bee?" his voice suddenly betraying the anxiety he felt.

Without waiting to reply, Bee sped up the garden path, rushed upstairs, flung on a hat and cloak, and started off down the Ringley road. It was a lonely road, bordered on either side by high hedges that loomed out like ghostly forms in the gathering dusk, but Bee had no room for minor terrors as she rushed blindly on. She had been walking for about half-an-hour when the sound of a horse's hoofs struck her ear, and in a few minutes a dog-cart, drawn by a chestnut mare, came trotting up. Yes, it was the Rainford dog-cart, but—Bee's brain reeled as she recognised the fact—it was empty, save for the groom. "Where is Sir Mark?" she said, her voice coming in sobbing breaths as she laid an imperious hand on the chestnut's bridle.

"Sir Mark is at the mine, miss; just set him down there a moment ago. 'E's gone to inspect the sinking of the new shaft with the manager—I mean the new man——"

But Bee gave him no time to finish his sentence.

"Then drive me there this moment," she cried, jumping quickly into the cart. "Don't lose a moment, for the love of Heaven; your master is in danger!"

Young Dobson, who was Sir Mark's devoted slave, needed no second bidding, but turned the mare's head, and in a moment they were flying down the road in the direction of the mine.

"I thought Sir Mark was to meet the train at Ringley?" said Bee, when she recovered her breath.

"Yes, miss, but we met the telegraph boy with a wire, mentioning the 5.30 to Barford, miss, so we turned at the cross-roads."

When they arrived at the mine: "Go to the engine-room and tell them to bring up the cage at once, and then follow me," she said quietly, and sped up the incline in the direction of the new shaft. Bee looked eagerly round; the wheels and machinery of the mine looked strangely black and weird silhouetted against the evening sky, but there was not a sign of Sir Mark, nor indeed, of any human being.

Stay! What was that? Was it a man, crouching over the mouth of the shaft and apparently gazing down into its depths?

Bee's heart stood still, as she recognised the Spaniard. In another moment she had reached his side, just as he stood erect, and, raising something in both hands, made as though he would hurl it down the shaft.

Quite silently, but with a spring like a panther, Bee threw herself on him from behind; there was a man's

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hoarse cry of baffled rage, a deafening explosion, and then, silence.

A moment later the cage came rapidly to the surface of the shaft, and Sir Mark Rainford jumped out, while the young groom, followed by several miners, came running up the slope.

"What has happened? Good Heavens! Miss Heathcote!" cried Mark, in horror-stricken tones, as he bent over the girl's prostrate form. "Here, fetch a doctor, one of you. Does anyone know how this happened?"

"If you please, Sir Mark, Miss Heathcote—she stopped the car, and told me to drive 'er 'ere. She seemed kind of frightened like, and said something about danger to you, sir; she jumped out of the cart, told me to go to the engine-room and 'ave the cage raised at once, and then flew up this 'ere slope. I began to get scared like, and so I 'urried up after 'er, when I see——"

"Well?" impatiently. "Go on, man."

"I see Mr. Sebastian, sir, a-standing over the mouth of the shaft with something 'eld above 'is 'ead. Miss 'Eathcote didn't waste no time screaming, or the like of that, but she just jumped on 'is back like a cat, and wrenched that 'ere bomb out of 'is 'ands."

"Bomb?" cried Mark.

"Yes, sir; at least when they fell together it exploded, and Miss 'Eathcote, she were thrown one way, and Mr. Sebastian——"

"Go on," said Sir Mark quietly, as he tried to force some brandy between Bee's white lips.

"Unfortunately, there ain't much doubt as to what has become of Mr. Sebastian, sir," said old Barlow at this juncture; "he must have fallen down the old shaft. The explosion broke away the iron railing, and I've just found his hat jammed among the twisted ironwork. Shall I see to the recovery of the body, sir?"

Mark nodded, and, motioning to a group of miners, Barlow withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

"Is Miss Heathcote asleep, Dick?"

"Asleep? No; but she won't have the lamp lighted—prefers the firelight, you know. Shall I tell her you're here?"

"No; I can find my way, thanks. The little parlour, isn't it?"

Dick nodded acquiescence, and Sir Mark opened the door of the little parlour.

"May I come in?" he said quietly, pausing an instant to take in the picture of a cosy room, bright with the profusion of flowers, and a couch drawn up in front of a cheery fire, whose ruddy gleams lent a glow to the pale face lying among the cushions.

"May I come in?" repeated Mark.

It was not the firelight this time that gave the vivid crimson to Bee's cheek as she answered softly: "Come in, of course you may, Sir Mark. I wanted to see you so much, if only to thank you for all these lovely flowers," waving her thin hand in the direction of the bowls of roses.

"You want to thank me! That is rather turning the tables, isn't it? I was under the impression that it was I who had to thank you—for everything—life itself, in fact. Miss Heathcote, do you know you are a very brave young woman?" taking the girl's hand and gazing into the quiet depths of her eyes.

"Oh, don't let us talk about it, please, Sir Mark; of course anyone would have done the same, and as Sybil was not there I——"

"Sybil!" in accents of astonishment.

"Yes, I mean, of course, she would like to have been there instead of me, but——"

"As Sybil would probably have had an attack of hysterics, I think it was lucky for me she was not present. But what made you think of Sybil?"

"I thought—I mean—Sir Mark, you remember my telling you I thought your winning love was a question of time? Please let me finish," in answer to a gesture of astonishment from Mark. "Well, I have found out—I mean that you need not wait any longer."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, at any rate," said Mark quietly, smoothing the ripples of Bee's dark hair.

"Sir Mark, what do you mean?" turning her glowing face towards him.

"Need you ask, Bee, my darling? Only that I love you, and it is happiness indeed to hear you say I need wait no longer to win your love," bending his bronzed face to meet hers.

"Please, don't, it is all a mistake. It is Sybil I meant. Oh, you must know!" a vivid crimson dyeing cheek, throat, and brow.

"Yes, I think I know all about it; but, as you say, it was all a mistake. It was you—not Sybil—whom I despaired of ever winning. Don't you understand, my darling?"

The answer was not audible, but was evidently satisfactory. There was a pause, filled up as lovers' pauses frequently are, and then:

"But, Mark, poor Sybil, how shall we ever tell her?"

"Perhaps we might leave that to young Festing."

"Mr. Festing, your new manager?"

"Yes, Sybil and he informed me the other day that life would be unendurable if they spent it apart, so I have given my consent—provided they are both in the same mind a year hence."

Another pause, during which the fire winked fitfully at the close proximity of the grey head and the brown.

"By the way, Bee, I can't help feeling rather sorry for the other chap."

"The other chap?" repeated Bee, bewildered.

"Yes, the writer of the impassioned love letters; I'm afraid you are rather a fickle little person, you know, for you seemed dreadfully keen on rescuing his letter from Dick——"

"Hullo! who's taking my name in vain?" cried Dick, entering the room at that moment. "What, no lights yet? Here, Mary, bring the lamp; I've brought you a letter, Bee," mysteriously, "from 'him.'"

"Thanks, Dick," languidly, holding out her hand.

"Hullo, young woman, you aren't as keen as usual about it; perhaps you would like me to read it aloud, or possibly, Sir Mark would oblige?"

"Yes, Dick, you can give it to Sir Mark," said Bee quietly.

"Whew!" whistled Dick. "Well, all I can say is, it is the first time anyone has been allowed to read Bee's poem before publication."

"Poem!" repeated Mark in astonishment.

"Yes, Bee's a blooming poet, writes things for the *Argus*, all about roses and cuckoos, and rot of that sort," said Dick with fine contempt. "However, in spite of her poetry and all that, Bee is not a bad sort of girl—taking her all round, you know."

"Just my own opinion, Dick, 'taking her all round, you know,'" repeated Sir Mark, as he quietly slipped his arm round Bee's waist.

Maud Coleborn.

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A BID FOR A PRESIDENCY.

Sir Gaveston Basistow was an expert in mendacity, also an accomplished villain.

It was owing to his being endowed with the above characteristics that he left the chalk cliffs of Albion, together with a vast army of creditors, behind him, and betook himself to Truxillo, on the distant shores of Honduras.

Sir Gaveston Basistow had a good look round for a month or two on arrival, then being still penniless, and possessed of illimited impudence, he smiled to himself, and decided that Honduras was in every way congenial to his health, and suitable for the retrieval of his fortunes.

Chance favoured him a few days after his arrival, when he had the good fortune to save Antonio el Marcias from a band of roughs. From that hour the two fraternised.

Antonio was a señor whose reputation was shady; but what mattered that? Was not Basistow's equally so? Perhaps the baronet might have had qualms of conscience in accepting the friendship of the black sheep in question, had Antonio not been a man of reals. As it was, Basistow linked his arm familiarly through that of Antonio, jingled two five real pieces in his pocket, and talking of British freedom and future possibilities for Honduras, led Señor el Marcias to a certain *caba*, well-known to patriots as a place where they could converse with perfect safety on the—weather!

"See, Antonio *mio*," exclaimed the baronet, drinking a deep draught of wine, "You have reals, I have courage!"

"Ah, you have courage, *amigo*," sighed Antonio admiringly.

"I am an *Ingles*," remarked Basistow modestly. Then he continued musingly: "President Bogran is no wise ruler for Honduras. We came to that resolution weeks ago. In a week or two General Bogran will be——"

"Hush!" cried Marcias, glancing uneasily round.

"We are perfectly safe," retorted Basistow, smiling suavely. "Is not the *padrone* in the movement? Let me continue! In a week or two we shall interview the President—at what hour is quite immaterial to the present discussion. In all probability an hour or two before dawn would be most suitable, but this is merely by the way. I believe you do not want to come too prominently before the Honduras Government—just at present, eh, *amigo?*"

"No, *amigo*, I am too lazy."

"Quite so! Now listen! In a fortnight from to-day General Bogran"—he dropped his voice to a whisper—"will be as dead as Pizarro! Half his soldiers are in the movement. The flame of revolution will flare throughout Honduras the moment the general's hate has been rendered void by steel. *Amigo*, may I inquire who is to be the new President?"

"Do you think, señor, that I have been financing this revolution from a feeling of patriotism?"

"Such was my idea," replied Basistow mendaciously, helping himself to another glass of wine.

El Marcias smiled bitterly.

"My friend," he remarked gravely, "I gave you credit for greater perception. The future President is at this table!"

Basistow smiled languidly; then stretching out his hand, which Marcias grasped cordially, said:

"Thanks, *amigo*, thanks! I accept the post!"

El Marcias' face expressed blank amazement.

"*Amigo*, you mistake!" he whispered. "'Tis I who will replace General Bogran!"

"You?"

"Precisely, myself."

"*Amigo*," replied Basistow sternly, leaning across the table, "it is time we talked sense; I am risking my neck day by day by mixing in this revolution. If the game were spoilt who would suffer? Why, myself! Being the recognised leader—your name wouldn't even be mentioned in the affair. If I run this affair, with my life in my hand, I'm going to get the reward. Money is what you want, Antonio, and you shall have it in the form of land. But I reserve the Presidency and the handling of the Honduras treasury for myself."

"I refuse!" replied El Marcias warmly. "I've spent a fortune in this affair!"

"I can't help that!" replied Basistow coolly. "You'l get it all back with interest when I'm President."

"Impossible, my friend! I have set my heart on being President of Honduras!"

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"So have I! Odd, isn't it? Do you think I'm going to settle General Bogran for your benefit?"

El Marcias glanced gloomily at his companion.

"I have paid you to do so!"

"Paid? Pooh! Do you think money will pay me for risking my life for two whole months? No, friend; rest assured that it will not. You may have all Honduras, except a few miles, but I reserve the Presidency."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall carry it through by myself, or else spoil the revolution."

El Marcias thought deeply for a few moments; then, lighting a cigar, remarked meditatively:

"Your method of carrying on Honduras politics is commendable, if somewhat novel; yet, if I may dare say such a thing, your policy has a flaw."

"Possibly; most policies have flaws," Basistow replied, yawning. "What is the flaw you see?"

"*Myself.*"

"Indeed?"

"At the present moment you are the leader of the Revolutionists. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"If anything were to come out about it, the person who told tales would gain honour and riches, while the leader of the Revolutionists would——"

"Suffer for his patriotism," interrupted Basistow.

"I see you appreciate the position," remarked El Marcias suavely. "Shall I continue?"

"By all means."

"It is possible that the informant might gain the highest position of trust in the Republic, provided, of course, he was a man of means. He might then, when the time was opportune, desiring to become a president, remove the ruler of the State! Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," replied Basistow, with a smile; "but those nice little plans might be upset."

"True," answered El Marcias thoughtfully. "How do you suppose they could?"

"Well, a knife tickling the would-be informant between the shoulder blades might induce him to change his mind," remarked Basistow. "What is *your* opinion?"

El Marcias shrugged his shoulders.

"Have an absinthe with me? I desire to drink your health—the health of the new President of Honduras!"

"Señor, I accept the absinthe and the toast." Basistow replied smilingly, "and will now tell you something. I have arranged that General Bogran shall die *to-night*."

"To-night?" echoed El Marcias. "To-night? You jest, of course. You mean two weeks hence?"

"I mean what I say!" retorted Basistow sternly. "Are you not aware that he is at this moment in Truxillo, at the house of Don Ipeo Mercedez?"

"No, *por Dios.*"

Basistow smiled compassionately at him, then remarked:

"*Amigo*, you have but a poor head to manage a revolution. When one carries one's life in one's hand, an enemy's movements should never be missed. No, not even the most trivial. The blow will be struck at midnight. I shall await you at a quarter before the hour, in the Plaza Santa Anna. *Buenos.*"

They bowed nearly to the ground; then Basistow sauntered away, leaving Antonio el Marcias alone.

"Carmilita," he cried, addressing a waitress a few yards from him, "an absinthe. *Por Dios*, an unmannerly boor. Still, I am the price of an absinthe the richer. *He* a President? Fool that he is to speak so soon—he should have waited longer before he proved himself dangerous! As it is——"

He finished his sentence by smiling enigmatically.

* * * * *

The hour of midnight rang out clearly on the still night air.

Antonio had as yet not appeared on the silent plaza, deserted but for the motionless figure of Sir Gaveston, who, beneath the shadow of the statue of Santa Maria del Pilar, awaited the arrival of El Marcias.

The quarter past chimed in cracked notes across the silent city before Antonio appeared.

"Confound you, man; you're late," growled the baronet. "You are enough to ruin any revolution! Do you know that the revolutionary force of Truxillo are only waiting to hear the report of my revolver before they revolt openly?"

"I was detained!" murmured Marcias apologetically.

Basistow sneered; then shrugged his shoulders and pushed forward at a rapid rate in the direction of the house of Don Ipeo Mercedez.

The door was slightly ajar. Pushing it open, Sir Gaveston entered cautiously, followed by El Marcias, closed the door quietly, when they were challenged:

"Ah, Pedro!" whispered back the baronet. "Is all safe?"

"As the grave, señor," replied Pedro in a low voice. "Who is with you?"

"A friend, *amigo*! A doctor to see if Bogran's heart beats the same an hour hence as it does now!"

The door-keeper sniggered softly, and stood aside to let the two men pass.

Cautiously the pair crept along the passage and up the stairs, and came to a halt in front of the door of the President's bedroom. Here Basistow took an oil-can from his pocket, and carefully commenced to oil the hinges and the lock before he attempted to open the door.

"An instant's precipitation will spoil our plans!" muttered the baronet, gently turning the handle.

A loud creak answered his remark; the lock was evidently rusty.

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his brow as he heard the noise. Gripping the butt of his revolver, he placed his ear against the keyhole and listened.

Silence reigned, disturbed only by the snoring of the unsuspecting President.

"Thought I had mulled the affair then," muttered

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Basistow in a relieved tone of voice, as he carefully oiled the lock again.

Replacing his revolver in his belt, he drew his bowie-knife.

"Steel is safer than shot!" he whispered in the ear of El Marcias in so sinister a voice that that worthy recoiled. "It makes no noise, you know!"

Once more he turned the handle. This time it answered the touch of his hand without creaking. Gripping the haft of his knife more tightly than before, he pushed the door cautiously open, peered furtively round, then entered the apartment on tip-toe.

By the light of the moon, then at its full, the revolutionists were able to see the bed on which slept the President. He was sleeping restlessly, his arms outside the solitary sheet which formed his only bed covering. His face, ghastly pale, was turned towards a chair on which a revolver lay within easy reach of the sleeper.

"*Dios!* Sleep ever rests lightly on the suspicious," remarked Basistow in a whisper. "Still, light as it is, it will serve my purpose!"

El Marcias' face was ghastly in its pallor, his form trembled like an aspen, as with hands clenched he followed Basistow, who, creeping forward, approached the bedstead of General Bogran.

"If he should wake," muttered Basistow thickly, "I should have to fly, and lose all!"

He raised the knife above the sleeper's chest; then El Marcias sprang forward, and, seizing the weapon from the grasp of the amazed baronet, shouted in a loud, resonant voice:

"Bogran, awake! Your life is threatened!"

"You blackguard!" shouted Basistow furiously, grasping El Marcias by the throat with a grip of iron, as the President, leaping from his bed seized his revolver and stood irresolute, uncertain how to act.

Like a flash it dawned across the baronet's brain how he could score against El Marcias.

Banishing the thought of stabbing the President where he stood, an attempt which would have been rendered abortive by the presence of Bogran's guards, who, hearing the noise of a *mêlée*, had rushed in, he cried:

"Help! This man has attempted the life of General Bogran! I denounce him!"

El Marcias fought like a tiger at bay, but being no match for the athletic baronet, found his level in a very short space of time on the ground. In a second he was disarmed of Basistow's knife, which he still held in his hand, and bound.

The baronet leant against the bedpost, breathing hard. He had a strong desire to be theatrical.

"Excellency!" he gasped, pointing to the pinioned man. "I denounce that man as a revolutionist. By merest chance I passed down the street, and saw him creep into this house. I—I followed and—was just in time!"

"But the sentry?" exclaimed Bogran. "Where was he?"

"Away! Perhaps he has fled!"

One of the President's guards testified that Pedro was not at his post when he had passed a few minutes before.

"Excellency!" cried El Marcias, almost choking with passion. "He lies— he——"

"Silence!" interrupted Bogran in a terrible voice, then, turning to the guard, continued: "Let him be shot at once!"

"Mercy! He lies—he——"

"Silence him!" interrupted the General; then, as a soldier did as he was bid with the end of a rifle and dragged him out of the room, Bogran turned to the baronet, saying: "Señor, words are too feeble to express my thanks for this signal service. A deed shall prove my gratitude. Which would you prefer, wealth or position?"

"Being very short of money, I should prefer the former," replied Basistow genially.

"So be it. Good-night! Have you a cigarette?"

Basistow opened his case, and, as the President selected one, a rattle of musketry without announced the execution of Don Antonio el Marcias.

The following morning Basistow received a draft on the Truxillo branch of the Banque Nationale for 700,000 reals, which he promptly cashed.

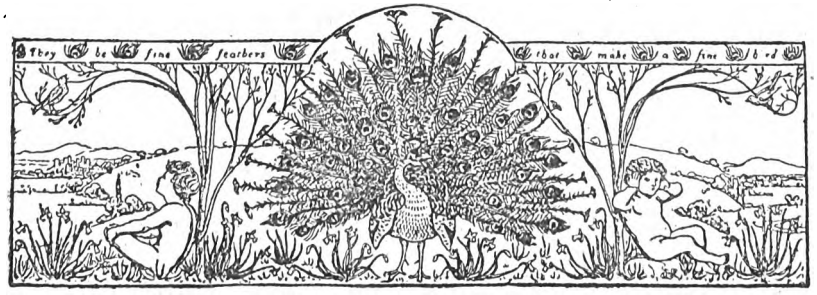
The day after, the house of El Marcias was searched from attic to basement, with the result that a quantity of letters bearing the signature of Sir Gaveston Basistow came to light.

The perusal of the correspondence in question induced a smart body of infantry to visit the house where Sir Gaveston lodged.

The landlord met them with open arms, called on every saint in the calendar to bless them, and then inquired their business.

On hearing what it was, he informed them that he was much grieved, but that the *hidalgo* had sailed the previous day with the cash.

TRISTAM K. MONKE.



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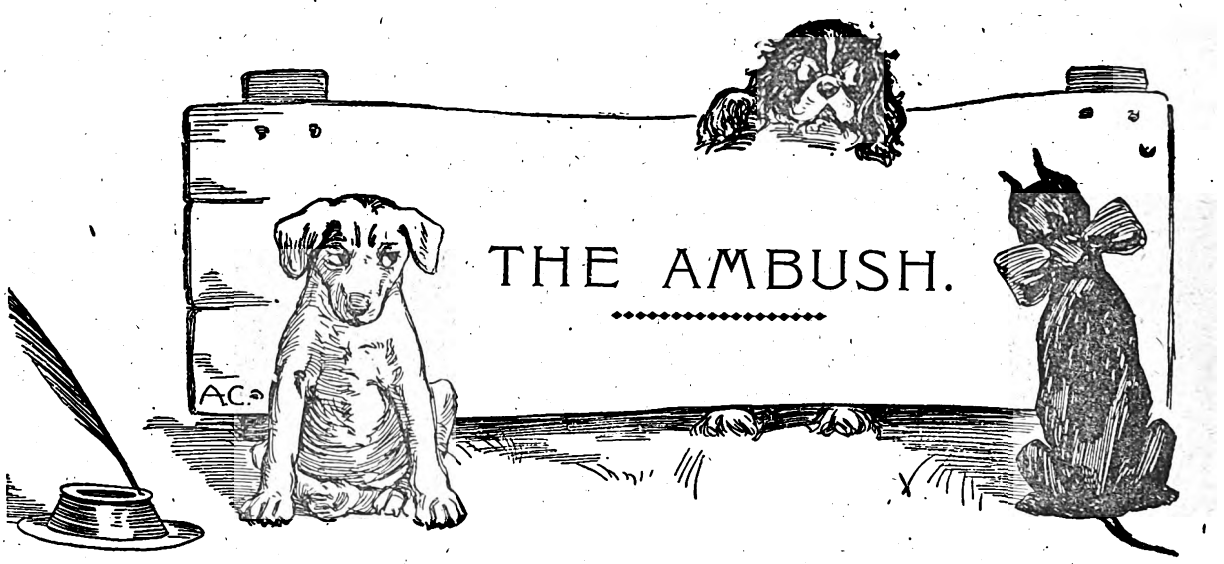

THE AMBUSH.

"PIGOL! Artaud! Didier!"

Each man answered "Present" as his name was called, and, rising from his straw bed, took his rifle from the rack, and went silently out into the court.

Five o'clock struck from the steeple of a distant church, each stroke vibrating with a dismal sound.

Without a word the sharpshooters drew up before the half open door of the post, through which came puffs of warm air, and whose windows were dimly lighted by the rays of a petroleum lamp. There were ten men, their hands in their pockets, their guns hanging from the shoulders by a strap, the collars of their jackets turned up, and shivering from the first contact with the cold morning air.

At a distance, by the walls of the farm, a sentinel was pacing up and down, peering into the menacing darkness, with ears alert for the vague sounds of the country. He saluted with a "Good luck, comrades!" and after halting a moment to watch us descend towards the Meuse by a path leading through a little hollow, continued his monotonous promenade.

We followed the bank of the river. The water flowed beside us with an intermittent splashing and a gentle rustle against the rushes. We could see nothing distinctly. The river and the town were asleep, and the fields and sky seemed blended in a uniform tint of Indian ink.

My men marched without speaking a word, and with the cautious wariness that proximity to the enemy gives to the bravest. At such a time, when plunging into an unknown danger, there are few but would feel a shiver run through them, and I, myself, having tolerably excitable nerves, feverishly fingered my sword knot beneath my cape.

When we passed our last outpost we halted, and in a few words I explained to my men the work which lay before us.

Every morning at daybreak a platoon of Uhlans made a round between Warcq and Darmouzy, two towns occupied by a Prussian observation corps. They were seen to file quietly along about twelve miles in advance of their lines. We had orders to lie in ambush for them in the woods of Etourneaux, through which they had to pass.

We soon left the towing path and cut across the fields, by a difficult ascent, where our feet sank in the long grass.

The wind had risen, driving away the clouds, and a dim light fell from above. About two hundred yards before us a dwelling outlined itself—the farm of Grael, recently burnt to prevent the Prussians from establishing themselves there.

One soldier was sent forward to scout, and went off like a hare, crouching and using the greatest caution. From the ditch where we were hidden, with weapons ready, we watched him for some time; then he disappeared in the dusk. In about five minutes he returned, having seen nothing suspicious. Then we crossed the courtyard of the farm. Only the four walls were still standing, but half crumbled away; the burnt *débris* crushed under our feet, and a strong smell of smoke almost choked us. Perfect silence reigned—the silence of new ruins, where life has not yet had time to graft itself upon the death of former things.

A grey light appeared in the horizon; the wind wafted us the sound of a clock striking the half-hour, and the voices of cocks saluting the dawn.

As we reached the wood the day began to break. We marched in single file along an indistinct path, obstructed by overhanging branches which scratched our faces or fell with a dry crack. The dead leaves, blown here and there by a puff of wind, awakened echoes in the wood; then again all was silence.

"Halt!"

The sun rising behind us in the fog threw a red light across the coppice, and the dew sparkled on the borders of the leaves. An early chaffinch sang above our heads.

Stationed on the bank overhanging the road, some of the sharpshooters squatted on their heels and hastily ate a piece of bread or drank a swallow of brandy; the others waited, lying on their stomachs, their elbows buried in the moss. They all looked serious, with pinched noses and set lips.

Daylight increased. Already we could see the white trunks of the birch trees, looking like stiff phantoms among the mottled foliage. The morning dampness penetrated me to the bone in spite of my cape, and I

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dozed with my eyes open, made light-headed by the odour of the moist leaves and the anticipation of the coming fight; odd dreams and fantastic hallucinations wandered through my brain, and tangled rings of Uhlans seemed to dance around me. After many wakenings, I mechanically drew out my watch—the hands seemed stationary, for they moved with such exasperating slowness.

"Lieutenant," a sergeant whispered in my ear, "there they come—there they come!" I drew myself up. "Attention, comrades! On no account fire without the word of command. Our lives depend upon it. Do you understand?"

The trot of the horses became more and more distinct. Suddenly it ceased. The Prussians consulted together before entering the Etourneaux woods. Soon one of them rode forward as a scout, revolver in his hand, and passed about ten paces before us—a handsome fellow, sitting upright on his horse, whose crupper was covered by the long cape—his colours, black and white, floating behind him in the wind.

He advanced a few steps, carefully scrutinising both sides of the road. He hesitated a moment and listened, then he drew up his horse's bridle, and almost immediately a whistle sounded, telling his companions that the road was clear.

From our shelter we could hear the Uhlans laugh and joke, chopping their harsh Teutonic syllables, and swearing at their sturdy Mechlenberg horses when they stumbled in the heavy leaves, wet with dew.

A strange emotion took me in the throat, as if a hand grasped me there. I certainly had no fear, but it seemed to me as if I was about to commit a cowardly act in killing these men by surprise, almost by treachery, without allowing them to defend themselves. Yes; I hated the Germans, those odious conquerors, whose halting places were marked by executions, pillages and arson, and yet there was a feeling stronger than myself, a supreme pity took possession of me, my flesh revolted, and I would have wished to beg for mercy.

They were plainly in view against the blue sky as they came towards us, their bodies shaking gently, their helmets securely fastened over their foreheads, the lance resting in the stirrup and held by a strap beneath. The scabbards of their swords clashed against their saddles, their horses' bits flashed in the green reflections of the wood, and the Uhlans continued to laugh and joke.

One was quite young, almost a boy, and did not laugh with the others. I noticed him especially, and thought of the mother he had doubtless left behind in Germany. I imagined a room, shining with neatness, with a large earthenware stove, the father seated in his easy chair smoking his porcelain pipe, and beside his table sat the mother and sister ravelling lint for the wounded. There is a knock. "Ah, it is the postman," cries the young girl joyfully. "News from brother," going quickly to open the door, while the mother rises hastily.

"Why, this is strange! It is not his writing!"

For a moment nothing is heard in the room, but the roar of the stove, and the rustling of the envelope hastily torn open—then the poor woman falls backwards with a loud cry: "He is dead! He is dead!"

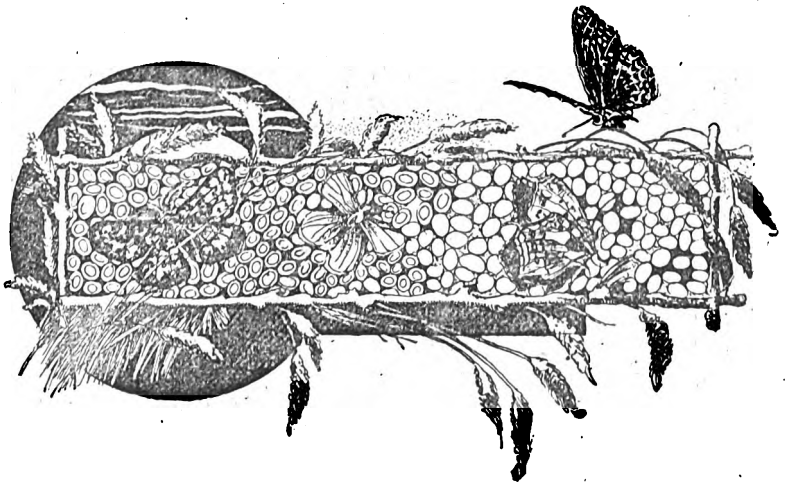
But now the riders were just passing us. There was no time to hesitate. I straightened up and gave the command:

"Fire!"

Ten reports sounded at once, together with cries of pain and the sound of furious galloping, then we perceived four men and two horses lying upon the road, mortally wounded, and among them the little Uhlan, with a bullet hole through his forehead, stretched upon his back with his legs apart, and his hands clinched. The others had turned horse and fled on a gallop towards Damouzy.

We returned without being molested, were cheered by our comrades, congratulated by our colonel, and received our orders for the day. But, in spite of all, there remained with me for a long time a nervous depression, a bitter memory—something like remorse for a duty fulfilled.

P. Labarrière.



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BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. (*continued*).

THE consciousness of failure, of folly, thrilled through Hardy like a pain.

He had, in truth, lost the best possible chance.

"Well," he said after a minute, "and you have lost yours, too, Yen How."

"I will get you another time, boy."

"If I do not get you."

"Well, well," said Yen.

They had moved on a few steps—together. There was silence in the darkness. Already in the two men was working the strange law whose operation they were to feel for long hours that night: the law which made it next to impossible to them to tear themselves one from the other.

Yen How hit upon the same half-sunken bench upon which Hardy had previously stumbled. Hardy put his foot upon it, and leant his elbow on his knee at one end. At the other Yen How sat down. Below them was the undulant spread of weed-patched sand, and the vague noising of the sea.

Yen How, who was smoking, took the cigar from his lips, and said:

"So you got away, after all?"

Hardy did not answer.

"*How* did you get away?" asked Yen.

"Heaven, I suppose, let me free, that I might strangle you yet, Yen," said Hardy.

"Poh!" said Yen How.

* * * * *

Minute after minute rolled by in a silence punctuated by the faint puffing sounds of Yen How's lips—a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes. Hardy was looking forth with wrinkled, speculative brow over the sea.

Yen How said:

"Did you have anything to do with the capture of the nine ships?"

"Which nine ships?" said Hardy.

"The Japanese war-vessels."

"Go to the devil, and ask me no questions."

"I suppose it was your doing, boy?"

"Perhaps."

"What have you done with them, then?"

"I have them."

"Not in Europe—come now."

"How do you know that?"

"I have searched."

"Europe is a good big place, Yen."

"Big, no. A green billiard-table, my son——"

"With pockets."

"So you have got them—in a pocket—really?"

"I may. There is no telling."

"If you had, you would not try to make me think that you had."

"Ah," said Hardy, of the two one fathom the deeper.

* * * * *

Caught in a sort of fascination, in a feeble, flaccid species of mutual mesmerism, they could not leave each other. Intense hatred and intense love are, of course, inverse forms of the same thing, and their manifestation is the same—an instinct for contact. A stab, a kiss—these are resultant varieties of the instinct. Through a grating a dog and a cat will maintain a mutual watch, lingeringly, for hours, averse to part. Here was something of that sort—a warfare and an attraction between a whale big as an ocean, and an elephant, monstrous, four-headed, big as a continent.

And as all grand intensities are elementary, simple, and resemblant to the passions of childhood, so the talk of these great men was not altogether unlike the wrangle between two bitter, lingering school-boys, sitting on a bench, with lumps in their throats—fastened together, unable to part.

There were few words, and a long interval, and few words, and a long interval. So a dark hour passed.

* * * * *

Hardy said:

"What a beast you must be, Yen, to torture a poor boy like that! What a sad beast!"

"Poh! You do not know anything. I had worse in store for you than that, boy."

"What an infernal reptile for God to make!"

"Abuse away! Your mind is not really first-class, after all. You are the slave of old, popular surface-ideas. A reptile is no worse than anything else, boy. If he is stronger than other things, he is better than they."

"Ah, well, if that were so, I should be glad, too, Yen. There is not much to choose between us, now, in that way."

"What, you are of the species, too, then?"

"Something of that sort, perhaps—if venom makes the reptile. It is your own fault. You have made me like yourself. By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How!"

"Poh! it is a question of strength, not of venom. You can be as venomous as you like. But what can you do?"

"Nothing perhaps; and perhaps something."

"Suppose you had a fleet to beat me at sea. Do you

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know how many I am sending over? All at once? You can't dream. Twenty Millions. What could you do with them? It would take you a year to shoot them all. But suppose you did; there will be some more hundreds of millions left. You cannot exclude the innumerable. What could you do with them? Be as venomous as you like, my son."

"Ten good men against a hundred million rats—I bet on the men."

"Poh! I bet on the rats."

"On the side of the men—Science."

"Science? What sort of Science?"

"The Science of the gun-maker, of the tactician, of the—"

"Well?"

"Need I say it?"

"Yes, say it."

"Of the—Chemist."

And at the word Yen How started as though pricked by a goad. He said nothing.

* * * *

"But, after all, you are a fool, Yen."

"Ah! How so?"

"Well now, I suppose you are a learned sort of dog. You know Science, I dare say; you know History, and on what trajectory the world has run so far. But it seems to me—can it be that you have really never caught a glimpse of the one big, fugitive thing?"

"And you, my son?"

"Yen! sometimes it hits me straight in the eyes in one blinding flash of lightning — a momentary flash, happily, for no staggering eye-ball could bear it long."

"Ah! And what is it you see?"

"A tendency in the world—the hell of a current — a secret design, Mr. Chinaman."

"Well, suppose I have seen it, too, boy, or guessed it? Why call me a fool?"

"Because this invasion of yours is not in accordance with the tendency so far; and the tendency is jolly strong!"

"You think the tendency is English in trend; and I say it is Chinese; that's all."

"I'll swear it is not Chinese, Yen How."

"Well, I don't care. Tendency or no tendency. Poh! A tree has a tendency to grow, all the universe is trying to make it grow—but how if *I* come with a saw and cut it down, my son?"

"*If* you cut it down, yes. But if it is older than that old sea there, and has in it the toughness of eternities, and is as wide as the girth of the earth. . . ."

A murmur of contempt came from Yen How. But his left eye glanced a moment upward at the darkened heaven.

"But what is it you are doing here, my son? How if I have you captured, now?"

"You cannot. I have help near. I could more likely capture you."

"I would not be easily captured, you know. But what is it you want here, sir?"

"I received your present of the child's heart. I came to make you one in return. I have dropped it inside the window of the house yonder."

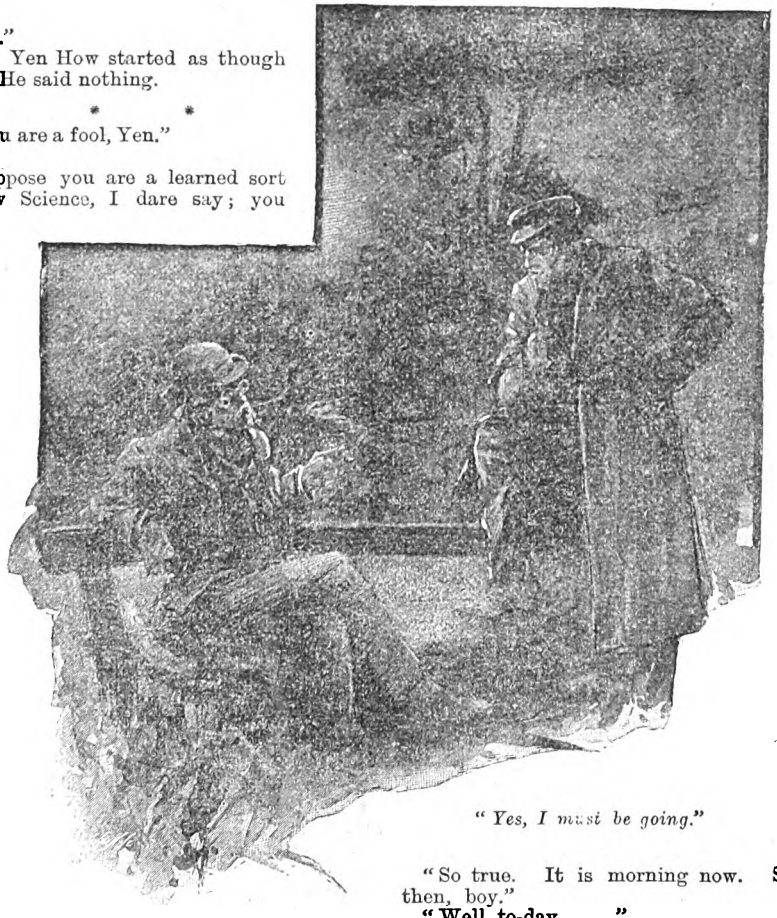
"Ah, what present?"

"The present of a lock of hair."

"Ah, yes. *Is she safe?*"

His voice dropped low, clandestine, wheedling.

"Yes, she is safe."



"Yes, I must be going."

"So true. It is morning now. Say to-day, perhaps, then, boy."

"Well, to-day. . . ."

One walked hurriedly away; and the other, sitting there in the dark, smiled above his nose.

As for Hardy, he flung himself upon the cabin-cushions of the steamer as she turned her bows westward, and for four hours slept there, Ada Seward asleep, too, on the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"TO-DAY."

SUDDENLY, a breath, a murmur, a thrill, a word of Life, ran like an electric wave through the length and breadth of Britain.

By wondrous marvel there were once more solid war-ships in Portsmouth port—ships friendly, belonging to England,

"On board your ship?"

"Yes."

"I knew. I heard your cannon. You are a devil for cannon, my son. But I do not look perturbed, I think. A man like Yen How knows how to wait."

"Then, wait."

"I am waiting."

"It need not be for long, Yen."

"Poh! a day, or two."

"So soon?"

"Meanwhile, if you do not want me to strangle you, get off this soil."

"Yes—I must be going."

* * *

Another half-hour, and Hardy sprang suddenly upright, a lank dim figure in his ulster. It was not very far from morning, yet no sign of light.

"We shall meet again, then?" he said.

"To-morrow, perhaps," answered Yen How.

"Or to-day."

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One walked hurriedly away.

not made for England by English hands, come from nowhere! By wondrous marvel . . . . by the might of the Almighty God . . . by His unspeakable favour . . .

With this miracle was coupled by the people, without knowledge, by mere infallible intuition, the magic name of Hardy. . .

Early on the Thursday morning the wild rumour spread, incredible, yet believed. And at once the entire nation rushed into undoubting hope, gladly casting off its gloom, smitten with new and strange assurance of its high and world-wide Destiny.

And all the daily private business of life now, for the first time, utterly ceased; and men stood wondering to wait and watch the throes of Time, agape as though scribbled across the sky in characters of everlasting red they beheld the signature of God.

As for doubt, with rash faith they flung it quite away. In England—once more—were ships; and in England—once more—a Captain of ships.

At this thought a thrilling heat swept through the blood of every British being.

And there was a rumour abroad that, beside these marvellous battle-ships—nine, it was said, and more—there lay suddenly assembled that Thursday morning in the inner harbour of Portsmouth, a quite unaccountable crowd of *other* ships, Atlantic grey-hounds, Norddeutscher and Austrian Lloyds, Royal Naval Reserve Merchant Cruisers, prodigious four-masters, tenders, Scotch and Irish coast-guard vessels, unarmoured cruising ships, transports, colliers, trawlers, wooden merchant-men of every build, thronging the harbour!

A great unseen ferment and movement, a wide business of preparation, unknown to the general mass of the nation, must have been going forward for many days. But to what end the concentration of all these promiscuous crafts? Clearly, not a fighting end!

At eight Hardy stepped upon the Dover Cross Wall; and as if to show how with the awful and momentous is mingled the grotesque, and how "something infects the world," there, before him, on the quay, stood a bowing, long-haired figure.

Hardy recognised him at once, and a sound of vexed impatience started from his lips.

Edrapol tendered his card. Hardy did not take it. He said: "I know."

Edrapol was all bows. He said:

"I take this liberty, monsieur—sir. I find myself without a friend to make me a small service in this country. . . ."

"Well, now, is it possible?" said Hardy.

"You refer to——?"

"To your frivolity, monsieur."

Edrapol bowed.

"I am here in response to your letter, monsieur. Between gentlemen——"

"I have no *time*! Is it that you still wish to fight with me?"

"The question is explicit, monsieur—sir. Can you ask? Am I not here to make you a favour, since you were unable to present yourself with me? Such terms, between gentlemen——"

"But you know, do you not, that it is not legal to fight in that way in England?"

Such a smile smiled Edrapol! It was withering.

"Monsieur——!" he said reproachfully.

"Well, come now, I will fight you," said Hardy suddenly.

Out swept Edrapol's arms, and down curled his complying back.

"But not to-day, you understand."

"To-morrow—perhaps—the deluge!"

"I cannot help that, sir. You are, I take it, a great man for rules and ceremonies. Well, then, I keep you to your rules. It is not, I presume, a usual thing in your country to fight duels at a moment's notice? Well, then——"

"But, monsieur——"

"No. I have no time. I am going away to sea to-day. If I come back safe, we fight at the first moment, as I promised. Even if you choose to meet me at my landing-place, which will, I think, be Dover, we fight there. You will easily find me; and I will provide you with a second, and everything. If I return at all, I shall be here by to-morrow week—nine days. I think that is not beyond the usual interval which one takes to arrange preliminaries, so you cannot complain. I cannot stay longer. *Bonjour, monsieur.*"

Hardy walked away, while Edrapol shrugged, looking after him. With the girl Seward, Hardy proceeded to the Ship Hotel.

He at once wrote a letter to old Robert Mason, bidding him come for the girl, recommending her to his strict *surveillance*, and making certain monetary provisions for her future.

He then dispatched four telegrams, one to Portsmouth, announcing his coming; one to the Admiralty; a third to a Dr. Fletcher of Harley Street, in these words: "Send at once the things promised to me on board *Hirosaki*"; the fourth to one Henrik Björnson, a Norwegian, living in Parliament Street, Westminster, in these words: "Hope you will not fail to be with me by noon."

He himself made his way without delay by the South-Coast Railway to Brighton, and thence onward by the coast to Portsmouth, arriving there shortly before eleven.

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Looking abroad from the Hard, the Cumber, the quays of Portsea, the whole harbour seemed a mere endless tangle of masts and rigging.

By this time the four thousand gentlemen who formed Hardy's army of blue-jackets were distributed among the nine newly-arrived ships of war, the rank and file partly furnishing their own former officers, and being partly officered by the remnants of the regular service.

The entire still-living crew of the *Iphigenia*—the "Hundred and Eighty"—were borne in the *Hirosaki*, flag-ship.

We have not spoken of the doings of this gallant cohort subsequent to their departure from far Eastern waters.

They had found at Hong-Kong some coal-ships which they loaded, and brought forward in their wake. Again they had stopped at Singapore, and doubling the Cape, steamed by night, near by the African coast, through the Straits of Gibraltar; the garrison on the Rock, at a loss as to their identity, concluding that they must be Italian.

They were well provisioned in proportion to their number, and well coaled; so, passing south of Sardinia, they steered northward to M. Dumas' uninhabited island of Monte Christo (which is some twenty-five miles distant from the nearest land), prepared for a lengthy stay, there being two or three coves and bays affording very good anchorage.

The steam-pinnace of the *Iphigenia* carried a small quick-firing gun mounted on a pedestal for'ard; and Hardy, on leaving his men, gave instructions that any craft which might come near enough to sight the fleet, should be chased by the pinnace, and, if not captured, sunk. As a matter of fact, only three small Corsican craft were captured, and their crews retained at the island.

Hardy himself left them in the *Conrad*, and at Ile d'Elbe contrived to make terms with the *padrone* of the Maltese *speronare* in which he reached England.

The *Conrad* he left behind, in order, in the event of contingencies, to serve as a dispatch-boat.

Here, then, during some weeks, remained the Hundred and Eighty under the lazy Italian sky, shooting goats, and looking to their ships and guns. The Japanese whom they had with them they retained till the end of their stay at the island.

At last, with glad hurrahs, they saw the ship, flying the agreed flags, which came to recall them; and on the fifth morning they were at Portsmouth.

If it was true, as Hardy maintained, that it was men and not ships which fought a battle, the ships being only the tools of the men, then the *Hirosaki* was a great fighter. She was gallantly manned.

In addition to this, she was a wonderful tool; the largest effective-tonnaged ship that had ever been launched anywhere; the latest, and most exquisite product of the Thames Ironworks and Ship-building Company.

But with the fleet which we may call British collected at Portsmouth, the resources of Europe were not wholly exhausted. Among them, arrived during the night, were four ram-cruisers, a large corvette, two ram-monitors, and five torpedo gun-vessels from the Netherlands, the remainder of Holland's armament having been caught by the Japanese, or being with her East Indian Navy; there were also three small Norwegian torpedo-vessels; also, the first question asked by Hardy at Portsmouth was this: "No sign yet of the Spaniards?" There was none: the reason being that, as the entire home navy of Spain left her by America lay at anchor in Lisbon harbour, together with some Portuguese, they had been attacked, and for the most part annihilated, by a Japanese cruiser-squadron. Not one escaped without damage; yet as the Portsmouth force passed down Spithead, they were joined by a force of ten sail, mostly small, consisting of torpedo gun-vessels, all unarmoured.

Thus in this new Greater Armada, the Spaniard and the Englishman, in strange neighbourhood, fought side by side; this last answer of white Europe to yellow Asia being, as far as possible, unanimous.

There could be no doubt as to the day, or even the hour, of the final forward step of the yellow races. Already two hours after midnight of the previous night it was known in London that incalculable masses of men had put off from Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, St. Valéry, Tréport, Dieppe, all along that coast, borne mostly in flats with single paddle-wheel astern, in French-barge fashion—the most elementary form of steam motion—involving a journey of from eighteen to twenty hours to attain the nearest point of the English coast.

The front of this floating host must therefore be upon

With the girl Seward, Hardy proceeded to the Ship Hotel.

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The Hundred-and-Eighty remained.....shooting goats.

British soil at some almost calculable moment during the afternoon.

They were, as a matter of fact, retarded by an event which, though normal, came upon everyone with the effect of a surprise: the air, which for six days had seemed settled in a thick stagnation, at about ten in the morning—moved. A sensible breeze sprang up from the N.W., driving the sea-surface in sharply-lined hollows before it.

And at once there was a slight lightening of the dismal murk of the atmosphere.

Near noon a brief meeting of captains, summoned by Hardy, took place at Government House. He had little to say, except to point out that the battle upon which they were about to enter was with men of different, less nice, *morale* and training, than ordinary European sailors—clever apes—islanders, yet real foreigners on board a western ship-of-war. He tossed his hand, and added: "It is true they are flushed with a consciousness of power, gentlemen, and are greatly superior in metal and numbers. But that will not weigh too much with you."

He also said that when the more definite orders for battle went abroad on the impending of the contest, it was his will that his purposes should be clearly explained by captains and commanders to every person in the fighting fleet.

He also said that they would be wasting their energies uselessly in this battle, unless one man, whom he had reason to think would be with the fleet, were killed or captured; and he himself undertook to discover, without fail, in which ship that man was borne.

Immediately a move was made by captains toward ships in the port outside, and a few minutes after twelve the signal "weigh" went up.

At the same time a great bustle of preparation was taking place within the harbour itself. Dark smoke left particles of soot on flapping sails. A host of boats flitted to and fro. Never did Gosport, Portsea, Portsmouth, Southsea, and the forts around them, and the still harbour between them, hear so widespread a rumour of rattling chains and hurrying feet, and shouted God-speeds, and ordering voices.

Cumberland and South Sea Castle Forts hooted a volley of blessings and farewells as the war-ship fleet slipped down the flood tide. A few minutes later the ten Spaniards hove in sight.

The fleet was also augmented by the *Hero*, the *Nile*, the *Sfax*, the two gun-boats taken in the battle of the Channel, patched up now, and three French composite gun-vessels captured during a Mediterranean battle.

They made up a respectable fighting-power: the nine ships being considerably the most powerful of the Japanese navy, and the *Hirosaki* the most powerful of ships.

Yet it was only the audacity of Hardy that would, with any sort of hope, have led this force against, we will not say the weight, but the numbers, opposed to him; and the havoc which overtook his comparatively little fleet in the battle that followed would certainly, had his judgment been absolutely cool, have been foreknown to him—or perhaps was foreknown.

Since the year 1892 Japan had placed orders with various firms all over the world for a hundred and seventeen new ships, making an aggregate of some hundred and fifteen thousand tons, half to be completed by 1902, and half by 1906. At the period of this new programme, she already possessed a very respectable navy; and at about the time of the outbreak of the European war, nearly one half of the new ships were already in her hands.

Hardy therefore opposed a fleet of forty-three ships all told (only eleven of them being ships of a high class) to a fleet of one hundred and thirty-nine sail, including the Chinese vessels, mostly of extreme modernity, and high fighting power.

His main dependence at this time seems, as he said, to have been upon the comparative *morale* of the two crews. He commanded a fleet composed, except for the Continentals, wholly of British gentlemen; the other crews were imitators, acquainted with tactics recommended in books, incapable, he conceived, of originating, incapable of combatting originality. He guessed, too, that small as was his force, he happened to have a superiority in one weapon—not in general a very reliable one—the Torpedo.

Perhaps trusting to one or both of these things, he contrived to give the impression (though it is questionable if he were as sincere as he usually was) that, on starting from port, he was without any suspicion that he might now fail to account for Asia as he had accounted for Europe.

The breeze freshened, but the air, though lightened, continued murky; there was some difficulty in deciphering signals; and to facilitate messages by trumpet-call, the ships moved onward in close formation, the Dutch to the extreme starboard, the Spaniards to port.

Ten miles astern spread far the great mass of other craft.

Alone sat Hardy in the *Hirosaki*'s conning-tower, which stood on the after-part of the forecastle-deck, very strongly armoured, and communicating by an armoured tube right down to the armoured deck, and the bowels of the ship.

In that hour so great a travail came upon this poor, troubled soul, that he could hardly bear to live. Here was the Gethsemane of the young man. All the Care of earth burdened upon him; all the floods and the waters of Destiny passed over him. He groaned; the forehead that rested upon his hand sweated great drops. A year ago he had thought himself a simple Hampshire sailor-lad—and see, now, with the cracking thews of Atlas he

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must uphold the world! "Oh, if it be possible—if it be possible—" This old cry of passionate agony rived through all his being. That he alone should bear the whole, he,—one frail back,—that *he* should be the ordained to shriek in solitary travail with the birth-pangs of the new Future that was to be, and be rent to shreds and atoms in the eruption of his monstrous offspring, this was piteous. To be a Saviour, it seems, is no light matter: the Redeemer from Hell must himself traverse the flames. At all events, the brain upon which what we call civilisation now depended was near to frenzy. That his toiling back could bear the horrid mass at all proved the dazzling [illegible] hour of the boy—but he writhed. The weight was [illegible] his sinews creaked. Also, in that hour of his [illegible] his shattered nerves represented to him the world which he upheld as a world black, draped in crape. "Oh, if it be only possible . . . ."; again and again, in groan on groan, he uttered his agony of spirit, longing only to die, to die. And even as he longed, he sprang up briskly, and he cried:

"Twelve knots!"

A little S.W. of Beachy Head the fleet was joined by the fast private yacht of a gentleman who was acting as scout. He went on board the *Hirosaki*, and was conducted to [illegible] Hardy.

The Japanese fleet, he said, were on the way between the Somme-mouth and the Sussex coast, but very much spread out, not apparently expecting serious opposition, and steaming at the rate of perhaps four or five knots. A vast breadth of channel was parterred for league on league with masses of barge-like crafts, which, if one might conjecture, were concentrating toward the narrow part of the Strait. Their progress was very slow; but some were by now certainly not more than nine or ten miles from the Kent coast. The gentleman had passed so near to one mass as to see through his glass a distribution of some sort of green pottage in one barge, and what looked like a fight between two Chinamen in another. He had not been fired at. The boats were incredibly over-crowded. He had heard, he said with a smile, that about 70,000 men were massed upon Hastings, and that forty Maxims were in position on the sea-front.

Shortly before four a scout of the enemy directed from beyond effective range the rays of two electric searchlights upon the British, and at once hasted back to eastward.

By half past, the British made out a great bank of cloud to eastward. The breeze had now freshened to a moderately stiff gale from the north-west. For the first time for a week, hurrying dark clouds above were visible athwart a gloom of twilight. The sea was curling into fore-running hollows before the British stems, like backing pages, who, with bows and graces, usher in the visitor.

John Hardy's brain, and heart, and life was in his eyes. He glared through his glass like a famished wolf.

The bank of smoke quickly cleared; he could discern forms of ships—eight miles from him, in line abreast—and moving, it was clear, rapidly. Legion was their name. His eyes started, and stared; he muttered with his lips.

He gazed for two minutes, crazily, hundred-eyed; then he started, and hissed a swift, "By Heaven!" Then he flew to the tube.

To be signalled to the fleet:

"Keep speed and formation. Use no torpedoes in combat."

To his own engine-room:

"*Full speed ahead!*"

The engines of the *Hirosaki* instantly quickened their throb and complex turmoil. She forged forward. Her best speed was nearly nineteen knots. She was like an ugly, stout island in a hurry.

The wondering question went pervading his fleet—was he about to fight the entire navy of Japan *alone?* Was he not rushing like the demented whom the gods destroy into the very mouth of Hades?

(To be concluded.)

Will be Published

ON FRIDAY, THE FIRST OF JULY.

PART I. OF

The Pilgrim's Progress.

BY JOHN BUNYAN.

With an Introduction by the Rev. H. R. HAWEIS.

Embellished with over one hundred and twenty designs, done by three brothers—

GEORGE WOOLLISCROFT RHEAD,
FREDERICK RHEAD, LOUIS RHEAD,

who for three years have been engaged in illustrating this favourite classic. The drawings themselves have recently been on exhibition in London, Paris, and New York, and are unique. Speaking of them

The *Athenæum* says: "These excellent examples of the right way of illustrating Bunyan possess those masculine qualities, that directness, and the robust energy that the themes demand. As to the higher elements we associate under the name of design, there is not the slightest doubt Bunyan, could he go to Bond Street and study the works of the Messrs. Rhead, would recognise in them a crowning mercy, specially reserved till now for himself."

The *Daily News* says: "At first glance these drawings, which are done in pen and ink, with occasional aid of the brush, appear to accord in strong family resemblance, but in reality the three brothers differ considerably. They have worked, of course, on the same lines to some extent, evolving a curiously archaic representation of the principal personages as they suppose them to have existed in the imagination of John Bunyan. . . . Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead has chosen the more weird and dramatic scenes in the journey, such as Christian entering the Valley of Death, and the men among the tombs and congregation of the Dead, the Land of Beulah, a by-way to Hell, the appearance of Apollyon and the escape from Doubting Castle, these and many other episodes being conceived with considerable invention and imagination, with realism and symbolism blended profusely. Mr. Frederick Rhead has aimed rather at facial expressions of character in detail, contrasting the greater virtues and vices as well as the lesser comedy of manners appertaining to humanity in an emphatic way that approaches grotesqueness in several instances. The incident of Pliable's return home to a boisterous welcome, the vivacity of the group where Talkative is at the ale-bench, the crowded assembly of Vanity Fair, and similar episodes, are done with skill and a bold touch."

The *Daily Mail* says: "Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Limited, are about to publish a new edition of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and to three brothers—Mr. George Woolliscroft Rhead, Mr. Frederick A. Rhead, and Mr. Louis Rhead—has been intrusted the task of doing the drawings. Most of these are fine, virile pieces of work; all of them are full of imagination and reverent feeling. It is interesting to notice that, although the methods of the brothers are closely akin, there is just sufficient temperamental difference in the work of each to suggest individuality."

This Work will be Issued in Twelve Monthly Parts, with Coloured Wrapper price 6d. each part.

Also an Edition de Luxe of this Work will be issued, limited to 200 Copies for England and America, numbered and signed by the Artists, printed on hand-made paper, and bound in buckram.

IMPORTANT TO CYCLISTS.

We still have left a few of the Cycling Road Maps issued last year with the *Athletic Record*, for Essex, Devonshire, Kent, Sussex, Herts, and Derbyshire. We will send these six, until the stock is exhausted, to any reader who sends us three penny stamps and a self-directed wrapper with a halfpenny stamp affixed.

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THE ILLEGIBLE SIGNATURE.

It was about fifteen days ago, at the country home of Brignac, on one of those exquisite afternoons when, although one shivers at the thought of the approaching autumn, the sun throws here and there mild though already paler rays.

While awaiting the hour for taking up the nets in the pretty bend of the Marne, a river which loiters indolently along the meadows, winding like a great silver snake, we are talking on the wide verandah which was filled with the heavy, intoxicating odour of heliotropes.

A charming man is Brignac. Formerly an officer in the light cavalry, he is a man of majestic chest, large face, a trifle too flushed, with an immense white beard and square features. Born at that period when the empire was at its height, he had taken pleasure as it came to him, and it must be said that the advent of the Republic seemed to him an insufficient reason for renouncing the pleasures of this world. He amused himself under M. Thiers, under MacMahon, and even under M. Grevy. Brignac was then—but why disclose the age of a gallant man whose friendship is true and whose cook is without equal? He was advised to try the baths.

It was there, near a spring, whence bubbled up a hot liquid which smelt like a bad egg, that he met a young English girl, straight and slender as a pretty bamboo stalk. He had still a gallant air and quite a fortune, she very little. The next winter the pretty English woman married the former cavalry officer. They have one child—they are happy.

Only Brignac has aged a great deal, and has become horribly serious. He is a good comrade for me. He gave me, when I was very young, that practical advice which is never forgotten, and I am happy from time to time to be with him—for an hour or two.

While talking, as we passed by a little room opening on the conservatory, I saw in the corner of the room, soberly seated before a table, my host's son, Gaston, a pretty, dark child. He had let his pen roll across the table, and with a glance that seemed to me full of melancholy, he followed the rustling flight of the swallows that were skimming close to the lawn, flying through the swarm of gnats.

On such a beautiful day, in this room which, in contrast to the sunny verandah, seemed more gloomy than a dungeon in the Palace of the Doges, the sight of this child-prisoner gave me pain, and I could not refrain from saying to my friend:

"How have you the heart to shut up this child at such a time?"

And Brignac answered:

"My dear friend, when he knows how to write I will leave him alone, for he is not yet five years old and very intelligent; but he must learn to write, and write well, I mean."

"That is, without doubt, because your own handwriting is like cat-scratches."

"That might be a reason. We should endeavour to help our children to avoid such of our faults as have troubled us in our own career, and besides——"

"My dear Brignac, I do not know whether it is because you live too much in the country, but it seems to me that you are becoming very much of a Prudhomme."

He interrupted me with some spirit:

"Perhaps I am like Prudhomme. Prudhomme was an individual who paddled his own canoe very well; besides, do you wish me to tell you why I am anxious that my little scamp should write well?"

"It is a story of that time when you would not have called me Prudhomme. It was a long time ago—'63. At that time Baden-Baden was Baden-Baden, and Monte Carlo nothing but a little fishing village. Everyone who was in the swim, or considered himself so, hurried to Baden-Baden as soon as July came round. At that time the club-rooms were empty—not more so than now during the week of the races at Deauville. That year I had remained at Paris, where in my little suite on a ground floor in the Rue Taitbout, I had not been so frightfully dull, when one morning a letter was brought to me. The letter was a demand for money—not one of those vulgar, begging letters, heaping upon one recitals of ill-luck, swearing eternal gratitude and everlasting devotion. No; it was short and to the point, without any beating about the bush.

"'I have not a single sou. Send me immediately a thousand francs that I may pay my hotel bill and return to France to enlist.'

"This letter, horribly scrawled, was dated from Baden-Baden. As to the signature, it was impossible to read it.

"I made every attempt, examining it letter by letter; searching among my papers for the name of the person

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who could have been guilty of this vile scrawl. It was absolutely impossible to discover any clue which would put me on the right track. At Baden-Baden? I had three hundred friends at Baden-Baden. But this unlucky name—still, I must find out what it was. For two days I did nothing but turn it over in my mind, seeking the solution, giving everyone whom I met this signature to decipher. Absolutely useless. Each person gave a different opinion.

"You can imagine into what a fever this had thrown me. At the time I was full of a great many no ions. I imagined that to refuse money to a f.iend was meanness. We are all simpletons when young. But what caused me the greatest annoyance was the thought that perhaps this note was from someone for whom I entertained a real friendship.

"I telegraphed to ten or twelve intimate friends—none was the author of the note. Then I betook myself to experts in chirography. One said the name was Casernier—had no doubt of it; was willing to swear it. The second said that he challenged anyone to read the name otherwise than Sutinais, and was willing to swear to that name; and, finally, a third declared it was not a name at all, but a word. In his opinion it was 'Cicilities.'

"Sutinais and Casernier were alike unknown to me. I turned over the club directories, I again reviewed my book of addresses, name by name. Nothing! I could discover nothing. I was almost crazy, you may imagine, and I had even lost sight, to some extent, of the original reason for all this trouble, thinking less now of obliging a friend than of discovering this name so carefully concealed.

"On the third day an inspiration came to me, so simple that it had occured to me only after all the other attempts had failed. I wrote to Baden-Baden for a list of the Frenchmen staying at the hotel of the unfortunate scribbler. I would need only to write to all whom I knew in the place. This calmed me. And, in truth, I needed it, for I had conceived an inexplicable rage against all this, as if something mysterious and fatal pursued me.

"I returned early on the evening of the third day, and soon fell asleep.

"I ought to tell you that I then had—I still have, in fact—the habit of using a night lamp. I cannot bear to feel myself in total darkness for an instant.

"That night—it is truly a singular thing, and I have never been able to think of it without a strange sensation—that night I was awakened by a sharp cracking sound in the great silence. I have never known what that noise was—doubtless the night lamp going out, for it was perfectly dark. At first a feeling of awful anguish oppressed me, a feeling I always have when in the dark, and before I had had time to fully awaken, I heard—yes, my friend, I actually heard—the effect of nervousness, you say? It matters not; I heard a voice, which whispered very low: 'Jacques Lerminier.'

"A cold shiver ran through my whole body, though I saw no reason for it. In a second I had risen, lighted a candle, and re-read the letter from Baden-Baden. Why had I not deciphered it before? It was perfectly plain.

"Lerminier was a refined boy, obliging, but a little wild, whom I had loved much when we were young together; soon lost from sight, then found again in those momentary encounters where a rapid clasp of the hand and an earnest: 'Do you remember?' is all, and then separation, perhaps for years.

"Poor Jacques! That is what we always called him at the school of Saint Cyr.

"He should certainly have had his thousand francs.

"I looked at the clock. It was past midnight. Nothing could be done until morning. Immediately I wrote a letter to Baden-Baden, excusing myself and explaining all. I placed the money in it and sealed it. And while I did this, I remembered that the whisper which I had heard erewhile, was exactly like the voice of Jacques when deeply moved.

"How strange is the work of memory in our brains, I said to myself, and how was it possible for me to recall at the same time and while yet asleep the name and the voice of 'Poor Jacques.'

"Then I went back to bed again, satisfied and calm. I did not dream any more of the whispering voice in the blackness of my silent chamber. No, indeed; I thought no more of it, until two days later, when I received a dispatch from Baden-Baden, My registered letter had been remailed to me.

"'Poor Jacques' had killed himself at midnight two days before—at the moment when my sleep was interrupted by a sharp crack—the sharp crack like the report of a pistol."

Brignac coughed silently to clear his throat.

"I positively insist that my child shall write a legible hand," he said with a sad smile.

J. Ricard.

Spell It. M. A. P. Spell It.

EVERYBODY has heard of Mr. T. P. O'Connor. Many people know him as an Irishman, many as an M.P., and many again as the most brilliant journalist living. He founded *The Star*, he established *The Sun*, and by them made possible the halfpenny daily paper as exemplified in *The Daily Mail*, *The Leader*, *The Morning*, and others in the Provinces.

It will be remembered that in the early days of T.P.'s journalistic career, when he started *The Star* the most noticeable feature in that then most noticeable paper was the column headed "Mainly About People." Before that time no journalist had been bold enough to exploit the personal par and tell us what famous people were doing in their leisure hours, in their houses, and the hundred and one things we now hear about them. It was in that column, too, that T.P. proved that, brilliant as he was as a literary critic, slashing as a political leader-writer, he was at his best in drawing a pen portrait of a man or a woman; in describing the one or the other, from the innermost beats of their hearts to the cut of the coat or the colour of the frock.

This feature in modern journalism was, as I say, initiated by Mr. O'Connor, and he now intends to enlarge upon it by editing a paper to be called "M.A.P.," which means "Mainly About People." It will be published from the Offices of *Pearson's Weekly*, every Thursday, at the price of One Penny.

ASK FOR THE FIRST NUMBER OF

M. A. P.

∴ ON THURSDAY, JUNE 16th. ∴

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THE KISS OF DEATH.

OFF the West African coast, in latitude three degrees south and longitude thirty east, lies the picturesque island of Anno Bom. Surrounded by the blue waves, girdled about by foam, rich in tropical verdure, it is like a gem of the ocean.

It is peopled by the descendants of Africans who were in captivity, and who, according to the romantic legend told by the present islanders, had a wonderful escape from a slave-ship, and were cast upon this land of refuge and freedom.

The legend, which serves in lieu of history for the people, includes the narrative of a heroic young African girl, who, inspired by love of her people, pure in heart, bold in resolve, and gifted with such talent for dissimulation and stratagem as might have belonged to the woman who overcame Samson, laid down her life for her kindred, and her final act was to liberate them while her blood was chilling with an insidious poison.

The story is given in the words of the King, as he narrated it to me.

"Listen, now, my guest and my children, to what Umzula's father spoke to his son, and my father repeated to me.

"The tribe of Kalamba dwelt, from the beginning of the world, in peace and freedom in their valley under the shadow of Kilimanjaro, until one dark night, when the tribe were all sleeping. Then, when no danger was feared, a host of Arab slave-traders fell on our village, and all that they killed not in our battle with them they made captives.

"Wooden yolks were placed about their necks, and they were driven with whips and sharp-pointed sticks—men, women, and children—for many moons, across deserts and mountains, and through terrible forests and rushing rivers—even the women, with little children tied on their backs.

"Many died of hunger and thirst. Many were devoured by wild beasts. Some were killed by serpents. Others were stolen by other slave men.

"At last, at about the second hour of night, they reached a great water. Next day, from a great ship that lay near the shore, there came many white men that were armed with swords and spears and guns.

"These white men had much cloth and beads, money and chains. They also had bracelets and anklets of heavy iron, which, after much speaking with the Arabs, they fastened upon the hands and feet of our people. The Arabs returned, rejoicing at all that the white men had given them for the tribe of Kalamba.

"The white men then drove us into their boats. We had no tears left and could only groan. The white men laughed and forced us down into the inside of their ship. We only knew that it was day when the streaks of the pitying sunlight came in through our prison door.

"One time our hearts leapt within us when the waters dashed over the ship, for we thought that our God was opening the great waters to swallow us up and give us freedom in death.

"A strange fever began to rage in us as the groans and wailings of our wives and little ones sank like fire into our ears and hearts, and made us writhe and hiss like snakes. In our despair we were planning to beat each other to death with the iron rings in our hands, the women asking us piteously to kill them and their little ones first. But the white men opened our prison door, drove us up, and fastened us with iron rings to the deck.

"Once more we saw the sun rising, and beside us we saw a great white cloud that seemed to stand on the water like the white head of Kilimanjaro over the plain of Kalamba. We were turning away, thinking it a cruel dream, when suddenly the cloud opened, and there stood before us a beautiful green mountain, fresh as the valley of Kalamba in the spring time, with silvery streaks of water rushing down its sides.

"Frantically we struggled, but the white man's chains held us, and his cruel laugh mocked us as we sat and looked at the beautiful land.

"That night Umzula, the eldest of our young women, and the betrothed of Nalunga, once the pride and flower of our tribe, but now the slave of the slave man, crept stealthily from where the slave men were playing with cards, to where her mother sat with her other children.

"She looked alternately at the darkening island and the faces and fetters of her father and mother, while her eyes glowed as if some terrible resolve had begun to burn in her brain. She spoke to her mother in a firm and determined tone, that reached every ear and made every slave chain rattle.

"'Oh, mother,' she said, 'although the slave men value every slave, even the babies at the breast, as rocks of gold, nevertheless are the slave men as children before the love dance. Only teach me the secret of the kiss of death. Teach me this, and to-morrow the tribe of Kalamba will dance and sing in great joy and freedom in the beautiful land that God has sent in the white cloud.'

"Umzula's mother looked from her daughter to the chains of her husband, the once proud chief of the Kalambans, and upon Nalunga, sitting, like his chief, with his brow resting upon his shackled hands, then upon the remainder of the once happy tribe, and then towards the mountain.

"Embracing her daughter, and having spoken into her ear secrets well known only to the wives and daughters of great chiefs, she gave her daughter two small vessels containing a liquid. Umzula glided away to answer the slave man's call.

"Umzula danced the love dance, and the white men, with poisoned kisses on their lips, fell one after another, sinking into death. Then Umzula, her eyes gleaming, lips swollen, and gasping for breath, staggered to her mother's feet and unlocked her mother's fetters.

"'Oh, my daughter,' cried the mother, 'why did you not drink of the liquid in the larger vessel to save yourself?'

"'Only enough to save my life long enough to save you. Tell Nalunga that Umzula, defiled by the kiss of the white man, dies with her last thought of him.'

"She fell dead while the chains rattled about her, and the sound of the cry of freedom rang in her failing ears. The slavers were all dead.

"The next day the ship was dashed against the rocks of this island. Over the grave of Umzula is a cross made of all that is left of the slave ship."

HERBERT POTTER.

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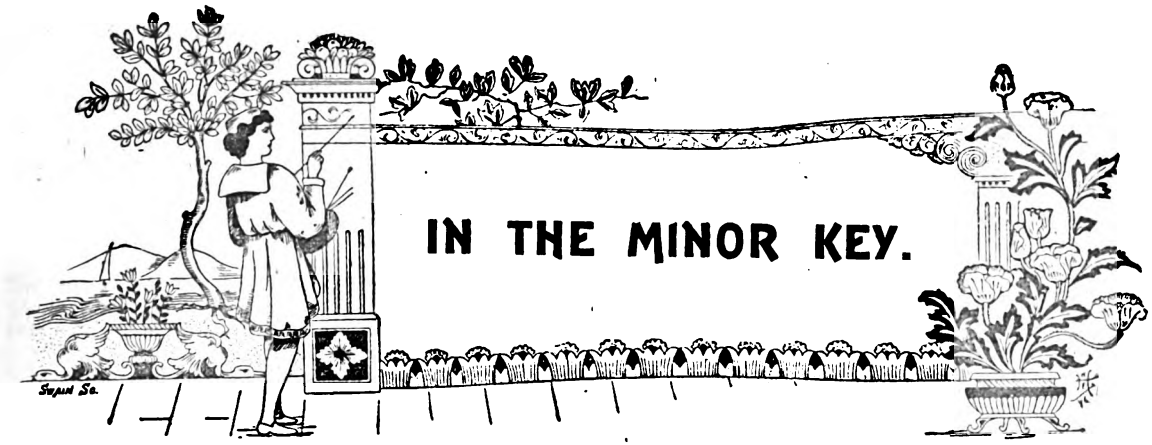

IN THE MINOR KEY.

"Vaulting ambition which o'er leaps itself, and falls."

"It is useless trying again, Mrs. Sefton, it is as I feared, your voice has utterly gone."

"Don't say that! Let me try again, perhaps I am a little tired to-day, perhaps——" But the sentence ended in a dreary little sob.

Professor Meredith rubbed his spectacles assiduously. He did not venture to speak or look at the little woman standing before him; but a sad shake of the head spoke more forcibly than any words.

"Then everything is over, all my years of study, all my hopes for the future, everything is in vain! Is that what you mean?"

Mrs. Sefton's voice sounded shrill and hysterical. Professor Meredith hurriedly rolled up a piece of music, and put out his hand.

"It is a shock and disappointment, I know, and no one feels it more keenly than your old master, who had hoped to——"

He checked himself abruptly.

"Good-bye, good-bye," he said nervously, taking the limp hand of his favourite pupil, and not trusting himself to further speech, he hurried from the room and out of the house.

As the front door banged, Mrs. Sefton started, and looked round her little room. The light of a dull winter's afternoon was fading slowly away, and the blazing fire light illuminated the walls and furniture. It was warm and cosy, but its occupant shivered as if with cold. From somewhere upstairs came the sound of a baby's laugh.

Hilda Sefton frowned as if the sound annoyed her, and she commenced to pace up and down the room with quick, agitated steps. A clock on the mantel-piece chimed the hour; she heeded it not, although its silver tone should have heralded her husband's footsteps.

"A telegram, m'm," said a servant opening the door suddenly.

Mrs. Sefton read it mechanically.

"Shall be late to-night, important business.—Dick."

"There is no answer."

Then, as the door closed, she flung herself into a chair, exclaiming:

"Thank God, I could not bear him near me yet."

For a few minutes the tears stole silently down her cheeks, then she spoke aloud to the now dying fire.

"So this is the end of all my hopes, for this have I studied and worked from morning till night, for this I have denied myself all pleasures and amusements, so that I might study, and my voice grow stronger and more beautiful. All gone, my voice which was to charm thousands. Better I had lost everything than that. Oh, God, why did I marry him? . . . What am I thinking? . . . . I feel as if I must hate him—and baby, too."

Hilda Sefton gave a bitter cry and slipped on to the rug, where she lay with her face buried.

"Oh, for a miracle," she sobbed. "A miracle, dear God—give me back my voice—take everything but that."

The days of long ago came back with painful memories—the days when she had been free, when she had studied and hoped, growing unknowingly full of a boundless ambition—the days before Dick had wooed and won her, and the days before her child was born, the child who had cost her so much pain and suffering, who had laid her on a bed of sickness for months, and had now taken from her her voice. For weeks she had hoped against hope as the days crept by and brought renewed strength.

"It will come back," she had whispered to reassure her sinking heart, and now she knew, alas! it would never come back again, and she must go through life with a heart well-nigh bursting with ambition which could never be satisfied.

"Oh, for a miracle, a miracle—anything but that!" she moaned.

In the darkness there was the slightest rustle of a woman's gown, and a faint perfume filled the room. Then there was a low sigh.

"Give me back my voice!" wailed the prostrate figure on the hearthrug.

"Child, do you know what you are asking?" said a quiet, strangely musical voice.

Hilda Sefton sat up and peered through the gloom.

"Yes," she said fiercely. "Yes."

Her head throbbed and burnt and she felt a difficulty in breathing; she could not even think clearly.

"And you would give up *everything?*" the voice went on with a stress on the last word.

Hilda put her hand to her head. She did not wonder who had entered under cover of the firelight; all such mundane matters had gone in her one absorbing grief.

"Everything," she answered, "for my beautiful voice to come back with its old power."

"Your child?" asked the voice very softly.

"My child, my baby, how can I look at her again? She has stolen my voice from me."

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"Your husband's love?" the voice was lower still.

"He can never take the place of my lost voice," cried Hilda bitterly.

Then there was silence, save for the cracking of the dying embers in the grate.

"And if your voice should be restored to you, would it atone for an empty, loveless life? Answer not hurriedly," implored the strange speaker.

"If it could be restored to me I would regret nothing," answered Hilda, with sudden firmness. "Nothing. But who are you to talk thus? What power have you to give or take?"

"None," answered the voice sadly; "none, save where the human heart is lost to all except ambition."

"I do not understand," stammered Hilda.

"When a human soul cries out to God even as I did, rejects all love and mercy even as I did, then it is my punishment to give even as I was given.

"Hilda Sefton, your voice shall be restored to you, but unseen, unheard, it will be my portion to journey through your loveless life by your side."

In the growing darkness for one second, Hilda perceived a face. A woman's face, sad with unutterable sadness, a face of beauty marred by the look of pain and weariness in the dark eyes, which were gazing at her with a strange tender pity which seemed to chill and awe her with dim forebodings.

There was a rustling sound again, and the faint perfume in the room died away, as with a wild scream Hilda fell insensible. The scream was echoed from the room above, then there was a deep, ominous silence. When Richard Sefton returned from his office it was late and he was tired. He noticed with surprise that there were no lights in their cosy little drawing room, and it was with a sense of coming evil that he let himself in with his key. No little wife came to greet him as he entered. He stood in the hall listening. From upstairs came the sound of a man's voice, an echo of stifled sobs, and at length someone appeared and descended the stairs.

It was with a certain knowledge of disaster that Dick greeted the doctor.

"What is the matter. My wife—?" he stopped, for the gravity of the doctor's face made him afraid to frame his question.

"It is your little girl—the nurse let her fall off the table, she struck her head against the fender. Hold up, man, hold up, for your wife's sake."

Dick Sefton broke from the doctor's detaining hand and sprung upstairs. Outside the nursery door the nurse was crouched, sobbing loudly. Inside, on her tiny bed, lay Dick's little eighteen-months-old daughter, dead, while his wife, with wide open, staring eyes, was rocking to and fro in a chair, singing softly to herself an air from some opera.

* * * * *

A year passed away, and it was the night of Hilda Sefton's *début* in the musical world.

The night of her triumph, the reward for which she had worked and longed! As she looked at the sea of upturned faces in the hall she enjoyed the feeling of her coming victory. No dread or fear of failure oppressed her as she stood there with smiling lips. Her voice had returned with added richness and purity, and she was fully conscious of its beauty and worth.

In the plaudits of the people would come the balm for all her sufferings, all her pain and loss. And Dick, too——

Her eye ran along the front row. Dick 's seat was vacant.

So he had not come to hear her sing, he had not cared enough for that; well! no matter, she wanted not his praise. But nevertheless she sighed.

And Dick Sefton meanwhile?

He had been detained late in the city and had rushed home to find an empty house. His wife had left early for a final practice with her master. He hurried through his lonely dinner; it was not the first by very many he had eaten alone during the past year. Hilda was often away singing, or studying, or resting, and must not be disturbed, and by degrees he had come to look upon these lonely meals as the usual thing. His meal finished, he went upstairs to dress. The room was littered with his wife's things, and he hunted for his dress clothes, turning various articles on to the floor in his unsuccessful search for a clean white tie.

"There is a lady downstairs wishes to speak to you at once. She is a nurse, I think," said the servant, meeting him as he was about to descend the stairs.

In the drawing-room stood a little figure in grey nursing garb, with soft fluffy brown hair escaping from her bonnet and falling round her face.

"Why Maysie, Maysie dear!" cried Dick, his face lighting up with pleasure (he did not know how much it expressed) as he seized the hands of his cousin and one time playfellow and sweetheart, "what lucky chance brings you here?"

The girl looked up at her old playfellow wistfully. She noticed how tired and worn he looked, how he had aged since she had seen him last, and how something was missing from his face—its old brightness and life.

"Your mother is very ill, Dick," she said gently. "I am going down to her to-night. Will you come with me?"

In less than ten minutes Dick Sefton and his cousin were hurrying to the station.

It was indeed a night of triumph.

As Hilda Sefton drove home, the ringing plaudits of the people still sounded in her ears, and the hearty congratulations, poured upon her on all sides, were such as even satisfied her boundless desires. But, as she entered her home, a sense of disappointment fell upon her. Something was missing. After all, had her success given her the pleasure she had anticipated? As she went upstairs she paused at the door of a room, which was seldom opened now, and went in. The light from a lamp-post outside illuminated the room faintly. Hilda stood still and gazed at the tiny bed.

Suddenly the sense of a faint perfume roused her from her reverie, and, looking up, she thought she saw a face, a woman's face looking at her with sad eyes of loving pity. And then she knew that she had worked in vain, that she would have sacrificed all the triumphs of the night for the sound of a baby's laugh.

* * * * *

The greatest singer of the day, the idol of the people, sat in the splendid drawing-room of her London flat.

"You are surely not going to sing *this* to-night?" asked Professor Meredith, picking up a song which lay on the table.

"Why not?" asked the singer indifferently.

Her old master looked at her critically.

"Because if you do, you will fail," he said slowly.

Mrs. Sefton merely raised her eyebrows.

"I am going to tell you candidly what, fortunately for you, the world has not discovered yet. There is not one atom of pathos or human sympathy in your voice. As long as you confine yourself to brilliant music, or to anything, in fact, but these simple old ballads, whose

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only merit is their pathos, you will succeed. To sing this would be fatal."

"I am going to sing it!" replied Hilda Sefton obstinately.

"Then I prophesy failure!" retorted the Professor; and, rising, he abruptly took his leave.

When he had gone Hilda Sefton took the song and read it through. It was simple and quaint, breathing of love and tenderness from beginning to end. She laid it down with a sigh, and rang for her carriage. Wrapped in her rich furs she descended to the street.

"To the Park, m'm?" said her coachman, expecting the usual reply.

"No, James, drive to——" and Hilda named an obscure street in an unfashionable neighbourhood.

"Put me down at the corner and wait," commanded his mistress to the man's utter mystification.

With slow steps Hilda walked down the quiet road. When she came opposite a certain house she paused. It had been the home to which she had gone as Dick Sefton's bride. She glanced at an upper window. A little girl with golden curls was looking out.

"My baby's nursery," muttered Hilda, looking at the child with longing eyes. The little girl was about the age her little one would have been had it lived—four years old. With a sigh she retraced her steps.

It seemed such ages ago since she had lived there, unknown, obscure, and happy.

What was her splendid home compared to that, and Dick!

She counted on her fingers the weeks which had passed since she had seen her husband last. They did not often meet now. He was away all day, and she was absent at night, absorbed in her work and public life. So they had separated, and Dick spent his evenings in the country now. His mother's death had left him with a country house, and Maysie's mother lived there and kept a welcome for him.

Maysie Breton! Hilda's foot beat an angry tatoo on the floor of the carriage at the thought of the girl whom she had been jealous of in the far away days before they were married. Now he was always with her. What did it matter? she cared not for him—she lived solely for her Art's sake.

But a face arose by her side, and she knew that she lied—that she loved Dick as she had never loved him before—loved him only too late now that she had lost him.

For his heart, yearning for love and comfort, had turned to the playmate of his childhood, and now his wife was nothing to him. If she went out of his life to-morrow he would not miss her, only welcome his release.

His release, yes, that was it. Who *would* miss her if she died? She could not count a single friend. For the moment she was the idol of the people, and yet so great was her loneliness there was no one to whom she could pour out the bitterness of her heart.

"No one? Yes, one." The sad face which was ever by her side, which haunted her night and day, which looked at her with those reproachful eyes in the moments of her greatest triumphs, and in the long silence of the night-time.

Hilda dimly wondered if she too, in some future life, would be doomed to haunt some victim like herself.

Fame, riches, honours and glory, what were they but empty-sounding names? To dust and ashes they had turned in her grasp, and for these she had bartered the sweet love of husband and of child. In her own room the full misery of it all fell upon her. There was no retracing her steps. Nothing could bring her baby back to life, nothing could wake again her husband's love.

"Oh, Heaven, be merciful, be merciful," she moaned, "and give me release," and the sound of the spoken words woke the echoes of another prayer of long ago. "A miracle, a miracle, give me back my voice!"

When the great singer appeared that night some few noticed that her face matched in whiteness the magnificent bouquet of roses which she carried.

One man even saw a strange tremor pass over the usually cold proud face. He did not know the reason.

Far back in a gallery Hilda had seen her husband with a grey robed figure by his side. As they scanned the programme their heads were close together, and once Hilda saw Dick's hand steal out to seek for that of his companion. She understood its motive. The words of the song she was to sing would appeal thus to lovers, and Dick was drawing Maysie's attention to it.

Then she smiled a sad smile, a smile which had puzzled her old master already once to-night. She had met him as she entered the hall.

"So you have come to hear me fail?" she said kindly. "I am glad, for to-night will be my greatest and my final triumph," and she had left him with the same strange smile with which she now faced her audience.

For years after, many people, besides Professor Meredith, could not hear the words of that song without tears coming into their eyes. Those who heard the famous singer never forgot that night.

It seemed as if all the pathos, all the love and sweetness in the world were gathered into her voice, and the silence at its close was more eloquent than a thunder of applause. When the audience had recovered and clamoured for her re-appearance, it was announced that the singer had been taken suddenly ill, and could not re-appear.

But behind, in the darkened artists' room, lay Hilda Sefton—dead.

Had God in His mercy given her release?

MARY WEST.

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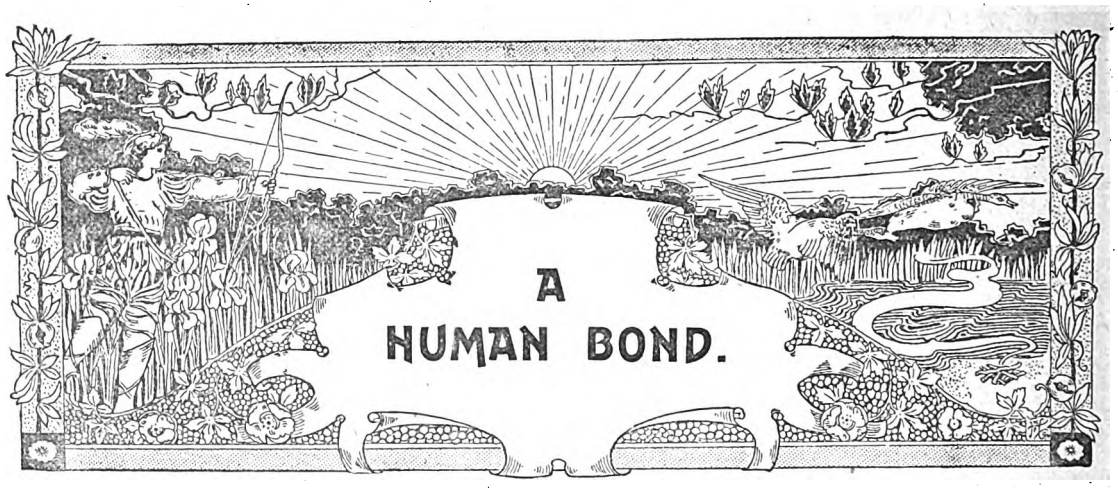

A HUMAN BOND.

I.

"Would that I could pass the examination of your heart. How I would cram for it!"

"Hush!"

Sir Lionel and Lady Charteris, of Linden Gardens, were giving a private dinner party to celebrate the promotion of their son, Jack Charteris, to a captaincy in the Guards. There were, perhaps, not more than a dozen or so of their friends invited; but young Doctor Charles Keppell, a tall, well-built young fellow, dark, with clean-shaven face, was amongst the number. He was an accomplished vocalist, and on this occasion used his splendid and well-trained tenor voice oftener perhaps than was his usual wont.

But he sang to Alice Charteris, who accompanied him on the piano. He was deeply in love with her, and in a certain measure his love was returned, but there was a prior claim to it which another held. All the ballads that Keppell sung were those that told of love requited and unrequited, pathetic stories of this life's sorrows, measured by the human breath in a few lines only, every word, though, having a world of meaning.

He sang these songs because he thought they touched his own sad love story, and perhaps hers. He laid considerable stress on the touching lines in "Alice, Where Art Thou?"

> I've sought thee by lakelet,
> I've sought thee on the hill,
> And on the pleasant wildwood
> When winds blew cold and chill.

She caught the inspiration, and looked up into his face and smiled.

During the evening, the twain managed to slip away unperceived, and held a hurried *tête-à-tête* on the staircase landing, beyond the drawing-room.

"We're all so very pleased that you got through yesterday," said she.

"Yes, by a fluke, I fancy. Anyway I'm through, and it's now Charles Keppell, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.," he replied with a quite indifferent air.

"How delighted you must feel."

"Not a bit of it. I am as dull as ditch water and a good deal duller. My delight doesn't run on those kind of wheels. In one way, of course, I'm pleased. I've managed to satisfy my examiners, and its nice to feel I'm qualified, but, Alice," and here he became very sentimental, "my joy is wetted with the rainy dew of a keen love disappointment, my enthusiasm is damped, and all my hopes and ambition are absolutely drowned. Would I could pass the examination of your heart. How I would cram for it!"

"You have passed that, Charlie, and with honours, too," said she with considerable feeling.

"Then I want my parchment to certify that; I want you to be my wife, Alice."

"I want to be your wife, dearest—no, I shan't say 'want to be,' because the feeling is inherent with my great love for you, and is prompted from a heart which is all yours; but, as I have already told you, there is Jesse Conway to be included in the reckoning."

"Ah, that reminds me, Alice. I had a letter from him the other day threatening all sorts of things if I didn't cease to visit here at once. He is watching me at every turn."

Alice Charteris turned away, deadly pale.

"Have you the letter with you?"

"No; I tore it up into shreds, and threw the pieces on the fire. Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"Well, it may only be fancy, but I dreamt last night that he had written to you."

"Oh, and what did you dream I did in the matter? I hope you dreamt good things of me—dreamt, you know, that I gave him a good hiding for his impertinence, for that is what I should feel inclined to do if he wrote to me again. How can you think of marrying a man who has taken to drinking, and leads a common dog's club life?"

"Oh, I know. It is a horrible thought. But you don't know all, Charlie. He holds a mortgage on this house, and Jack, too, owes him thousands."

"Heavens! And you are to be their victim—you are to be sacrificed on the altar of this man's passion because of his money! By Heaven, Alice, you shall not! You shall not be thrown to him like a bone to a dog, and when he has done with you—when he has bared your heart of all feeling to prolong a miserable life—as yours would be if you married him—throw you into a corner, and leave you there to decay! Oh, my darling!"

The lights blazed away in the hall and about the staircase and landings, and everything looked so bright and cheerful, that not a guest there would have thought, surveying the palm-decorated and flower-bedecked house, that financial difficulty lodged there, and that Alice Charteris was a bond for borrowed money. Yet so it

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was. Poor Sir Lionel had lost the best part of a considerable fortune through the escapades of the National South African Company, and it was Jesse Conway's money that was tiding him and his family over the present financial pitfalls. Alice Charteris was a very pretty golden brown-haired girl, with deep blue eyes, and features that were regular and very attractive. She was a general favourite, and had known young Keppell a long time. The Charteris family knew quite well that Alice loved him and hated their "friend," and they tried their very best to delay all matters in connection with the latter's marriage demand for goods received.

The Charteris family doctor had been persuaded to certify that poor Alice had developed symptoms of weakness that required her to be carefully nursed in a warm climate for two years. But, of course, she didn't hesitate to wear Conway's magnificent and costly engagement-ring. That pleased Conway, and the Charteris family, too, immensely. It was one way out of the difficulty. As a matter of fact, Alice was a bright, cheerful, and healthy girl. They merely played up to Conway.

"Alice, I want you, my child," said Sir Lionel, hurrying from the drawing-room, and holding a telegram in his hand.

Miss Charteris hurried towards her father.

II.

"You really must not say such things, Mr. Keppell."

"I can't help it, Lady Charteris."

"Your success ought to goad you on to make a name for yourself in your profession."

"A name for myself? I don't want to make a name for myself. There's no fun in that. There would be something in my making a name for somebody else, somebody I loved. When I step into the arena of the world to fight with it for a name it shall be only when my success is fanned by the breeze of one woman's love, Lady Charteris."

Her ladyship sighed. She knew he meant Alice.

"Sir Lionel has received a telegram from her *fiancé* inquiring if you were here," said Lady Charteris, with a struggle, for Sir Lionel had asked her to perform an ungracious task, failing himself to summon courage.

"Would Mr. Conway, then, in his arrogance, assume the office of censor and limit the right of a host to invite anyone whom he thought fit? And would he dictate to a guest? Lady Charteris, his conduct is insulting to you, to Miss Charteris, and to me. I can avenge his insult by remaining where I am, unless it be your wish that I should withdraw and leave your house, in which case that cur should only be my victor for a few hours, for I declare I would go straight to the Lotus Club and horsewhip him."

"It isn't for me to make any comment on what might take place elsewhere, but I am sure, Mr. Keppell, you would be the last man in the world to make a scene here, and I am afraid that if Sir Lionel does not send an immediate reply to Mr. Conway to the effect—er——"

"That I am not here, Jesse Conway may take a cab and come straight on here and create a scene, I suppose you would say, Lady Charteris?" broke in the young doctor, who felt, not unnaturally, much angered. Had not Alice told him only a few minutes before of the straits the Charteris family were in it is more than likely he would have said something forcible in condemnation of such an unheard-of occurrence as the turning away of a guest to please the whim of the *fiancé* of the daughter of the house. Of course, he knew the true reason, and kept it to himself.

"Inform Sir Lionel, my lady, that he is at liberty to send his message worded in that way pleasing to Mr. Conway," said he, rising and bowing towards her respectfully.

"Mr. Conway is so very jealous, Mr. Keppell," said her ladyship, trying to find an excuse other than the right one, "and one does not like to thwart the wishes and feelings of lovers."

"But they are thwarted very frequently. Don't you think so?" said Keppell with pointed effect, having in mind the love affair of her own daughter, whose heart had been bartered away for a monetary consideration, painful though the transaction might have been to Sir Lionel and Lady Charteris.

"Ah, indeed, it is sad to think about it. You are without doubt quite correct, Mr. Keppell; but we are the creatures of circumstances, and the sorrows of the world are but little understood beyond the afflicted ring."

"It is the pride of these creatures which is to be blamed for the sorrows that follow in their trail."

"Not always. If people were to live on the honest side of life and stamp the face of their circumstances with the die of truth—I am referring to those who are passing through a period of tribulation—the world would have but very little sympathy for them. Hence the greater part of the world is living under a mask."

This conversation took place in the library—a small room where Sir Lionel did his writing. That gentleman presently joined them.

"This is more than painful, Mr. Keppell, but Mr. Conway is one of your jealous lovers, you know," and the dear old gentleman tried to smile as if it were a capital joke, whereas he never felt so deeply humiliated in his whole life.

"Pray, don't allude to it, Sir Lionel. Singularly enough, I was about to start for home. Lady Charteris has confided in me, and so far as you are concerned the matter is at an end."

"Excuse me, but I want to send a wire off. Here, I say, Watts! Hand this to the telegraph boy!"

A servant took the missive downstairs. It was a message to Conway to say that Keppell was not in the house.

III.

KEPPELL and Miss Charteris were standing together in the hall.

"Well, once again, good-bye, darling, and don't forget what I have told you, will you?"

"No, Charlie, I promise you faithfully. And you won't go near the Lotus Club?"

"If I should happen to drop in and I find Conway there, you must not set a bar about my lips and prevent me from saying a word or two to him. I promise you I shan't put myself to any trouble in trying to find out his whereabouts, but if Fate thrusts him upon me—well, that's another matter. But you, my darling, will never be his wife. Good-bye."

The door opened, and young Dr. Keppell was soon out of sight in the darkness of the night. The door was closed gently behind him. He had hardly proceeded twenty yards down the road when the people in the houses in quiet Linden Gardens were startled and horrified by the report of fire-arms. Three successive revolver shots, a man's dying groans, and all was over.

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The Charteris family had greater reason for thinking things than any other family in the road, and it was with alarm and fear and trembling that old Sir Lionel and the rest of the gentlemen rushed out of the house, regardless of head covering, and the fact that it was raining. They were followed by dozens of other gentlemen from the other residences, all of whom ran to the same spot, where they found a policeman and two or three people bending over a prostrate form—the body of a man. It happened in a dark spot, and the poor fellow's features were bespattered so with both mud and blood that they were quite unrecognisable.

Our young doctor friend was busy upon his knees doing what he could for this victim of somebody's revenge, and when Sir Lionel saw him, he threw up his hands and involuntarily exclaimed: "Thank God he is safe!" and at once ran back to the house to inform his wife and daughter.

"Bring him into my house!" said one of the bystanders.

"Is the poor fellow dead?" asked another.

"No, he is not dead," said Dr. Keppell.

"Then bring him into my house," repeated the first speaker.

Accordingly, the mournful procession was formed, and kind and willing hands bore the bleeding body across the road into the opposite house.

Water and sponges were quickly handed to the young but fully qualified Æsculapian, who washed all the blood and dirt off the man's face. He reeled back.

"Good Heaven! It is Jesse Conway!"

IV.

"You see, Alice, it is like this. When a man is finally passed and he receives his conjoint diploma, he has to make a declaration that he will use his best efforts to save human life. It is an oath, and oaths are binding on some consciences. Now you know the reason why I have saved my rival's life. It went against the grain, for had he died no difficulty would have placed itself in the way of our getting married. I knew I was pulling him round and saving his life to marry you—think of it. Wasn't it maddening? But I did my duty, and my reward is the highest fee ever paid to a medical man in all his natural. In fact, all the notes and gold in the Bank of England couldn't pay back that fee. It is you, Alice! you! you!" cried the doctor, with rapturous joy, locking Miss Charteris in his arms, and imprinting kiss after kiss on her hot and suffused cheek.

"He has turned out, after all, an awfully good fellow, now hasn't he?"

"He's a brick. We'll pass over the *raison d'être* of the man shooting him—that's their own affair, although the fellow's at liberty, and Conway knows him well—and come to our first meeting when he recovered consciousness. How he escaped death is a marvel! Two of the three bullets found their way into his body, and we extracted those at the hospital; but when he fell his head crashed against the kerbstone, and literally split it open. However, he spotted me at the bedside——"

"Remember, Charlie, you are now a doctor, and you shouldn't use such slang," playfully interrupted his little sweetheart.

"Ah, well, it was only yesterday, I might say, that I assumed the frock coat—that visible and outward sign of man's mistake. Well, he recognised me. I asked him the usual questions, to which he replied in proper form. I told him that he was under me as my patient, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. He could hardly believe his eyes. I never saw such a change in any man. 'You've saved my life?' said he. I nodded, but not quite so ungraciously. He then told me the whole story about the shooting business, a bit one day and a bit on another. But it was only this morning—he's leaving hospital to-morrow—that he asked for leave to send for you. Little did I dream it was to release you from your engagement, and to hand you over to me."

The attempt on his life brought about Conway's reformation. From a wild and dissolute man, he became a worthy member of the community.

Three months later Dr. Charles Keppell led his sweet and bonny bride to the altar. Conway was at the ceremony, and the cynosure of many wondering eyes. On the evening before the wedding he had done the graceful act of presenting Sir Lionel with a receipt—the cancellation note of his liability. It represented a present of £20,000.

Mulvy Ouseley.

DAN LENO'S ½d.
½d. COMIC JOURNAL,
EVERY TUESDAY.

WHAT DO DREAMS MEAN?

Who has not at one time or another had some curious dream, the significance of which has perplexed him? Some dreams are caused by an overheated imagination or an impaired digestion, and others are so trivial as not to cause any grounds for a second thought being bestowed upon them.

On the other hand, there are many dreams which have an unquestionable significance. Many of them are influenced by our daily actions and thoughts, and frequently we find ourselves doing in our dreams what we would do in our daily life. These exercise our minds, and if we only knew what they portend we might be able to avoid events that afterwards come to pass. The history of the world is full of instances where dreams of a prophetic character have taken place, and the belief in them is shared by scientific and intelligent writers in every part of the world.

Occasionally a so-called dream book or two has been published pretending to give an explanation of these curious phenomena, but, as we all know, most of them are absolutely unreliable and are nothing but catchpenny publications.

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. Madame Georges will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "Dreams," c/o. *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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GREAT - WAR - COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE = = £5 | **25 Prizes of Handsome Books.**
Five Prizes of £1 each. | **25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.**

In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

HERE is the last set of pictures. Solve as many as you can, then place them with the other four sheets and post the lot in an envelope marked "WAR" to the Editor of *Short Stories*, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than Tuesday, June 14th.

When sending your attempt may we ask you to inclose a small donation to the Fresh Air Fund? Ninepence pays for a day's holiday for one child, and £8 2s. for a party of 200.

PERSON.

No. 33.....

WARSHIP.

No. 34.....

PLACE.

No. 35.....

PLACE.

No. 36.....

PERSON.

No. 37.....

PLACE.

No. 38.....

PERSON.

No. 39.....

WAR COMPETITION.

No. 5.

Name.....

Address.....

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PLACE.

No. 40.....

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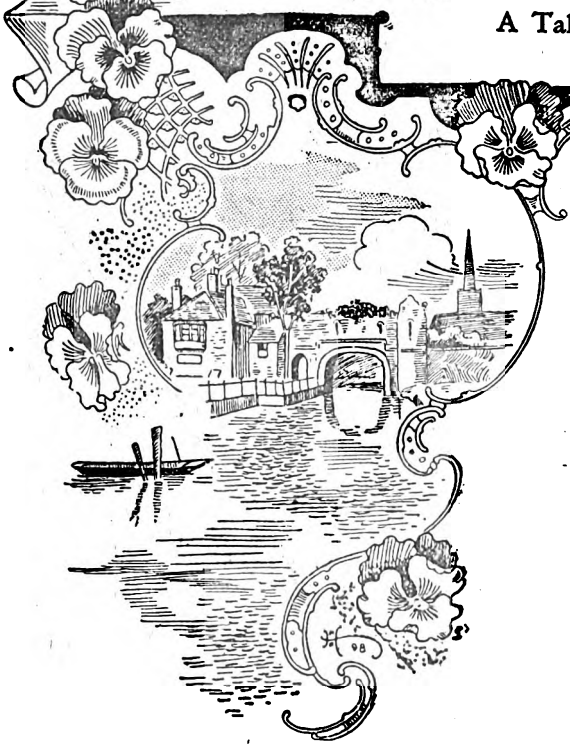
THE HORSEMAN IN THE AIR.

A Tale of the American Civil War.



ONE sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861, a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in Western Virginia. He lay at full length upon his chest, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon his left forearm. His extended left hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs, and a slight regular movement of the cartridge box at the back of his belt, he might have been thought to be dead. But he was asleep at his post of duty, and if detected would be dead shortly afterwards.

The clump of laurels in which the criminal lay was in an angle of the road, which, after ascending southward a steep aclivity for two miles, turned sharply to the west at that point, running along the summit for perhaps fifty yards. There it turned southward again, and went zigzagging downward through the forest. At the point of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out from the ridge to the northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road descended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer down one thousand feet on to the top of the pines. The soldier's station was on another spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock, but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look.

The country was wooded everywhere, except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley's rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary house-yard, but was really many acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the inclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs, similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the scene, and through which the road has somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such, that from our point of observation, it seemed entirely shut in, and one could not but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it, had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the stream that parted the meadow two thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult, but men will make it a theatre of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rat-trap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army to submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night, and were resting. At nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and, descending the other slope of the ridge, fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise him, for the road led to the rear of his camp. In case of failure their position would be perilous in the extreme; and fail they would were accident or vigilance to apprise him of the movement.

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurels was a young Virginian, named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents—an only child—and had known such luxury and civilisation as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of Western Virginia thirty years ago. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay. One morning he rose from the breakfast-table and said quietly, but gravely:

"Father, a Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it."

The father lifted his head, looked at his son a moment in silence, and replied:

"Go, Carter, and whatever may happen I hope that you will do what you conceive to be your duty. Should

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we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her."

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father, who returned the salute with stately courtesy, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers, and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the country that he owed his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution, and he had fallen asleep.

What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime, who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of Fate touched with unsealing finger the eyes of his consciousness—whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips have ever spoken, no human memory has ever recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was one of keen artistic delight. On the colossal pedestal of the cliff, motionless, at the extreme edge of the capping rock, sharply outlined against the sky, was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly. The face of the rider, turned slightly to the left, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift against the sky, and by the soldier's sense of the formidableness of a near enemy, the group appeared of colossal size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war, and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that commanding eminence to commemorate the deeds of a heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the horse, which, without shifting its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remaining immobile as before. Wide awake, and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and, glancing through the sights, covered a vital spot in the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger, and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his crouching foeman—seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes.

Is it, then, so terrible to kill an enemy in war?—an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of oneself and one's comrades?—an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew deadly pale; he shook in every limb. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous and hardy soldier was nearer to swooning from intensity of emotion and excitement.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised; his hands resumed their places on the rifle; his forefinger sought the trigger. Mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason found. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain; the man must be shot dead from ambush—without warning, without a moment's preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer he must be sent to his account.

But no—there is a hope; he may have discovered nothing—perhaps he is admiring the sublimity of the landscape. If permitted, he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. Druse turned his head and looked down. Below he saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of the figures of men and horses—some foolish commander was permitting the men of his escort to water their horses in the open—in plain view from a hundred summits.

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sights of his rifle. He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's—not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had silenced conscience; the spirit had said to the body, "Be still." He fired.

* * * * *

At this moment an officer of the Federal force, who, in the spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge, had left the hidden bivouac in the valley, and, climbing the slope, had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration farther. At the distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringes of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. Lifting his eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit, the officer saw an astonishing sight—a man on horseback riding down into the valley through the air.

Straight upward sat the rider, in military fashion, with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His right hand was concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof stroke encountered the resistent earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight.

The officer was filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the air. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees—a sound that died without an echo, and all was still. Pulling himself together he ran rapidly obliquely backward from the cliff to a point a half-mile from its foot. Thereabout he expected to find his man; and he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the horse and rider, that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aerial cavalry must necessarily be directly downward, and that he would find the object of his search at the very foot of the cliff. An hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen.

* * * * *

After firing his shot, Private Carter Druse reloaded

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his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock—pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. I am a great marksman; you know I once shot a match with Washington's ghost and beat him."

The sergeant was shocked and startled. He looked searchingly at Druse. The man's face was white; his eyes were restless, and glittered with a strange, uncanny light. The sergeant, still on hands and knees, involuntarily backed a little way from him.

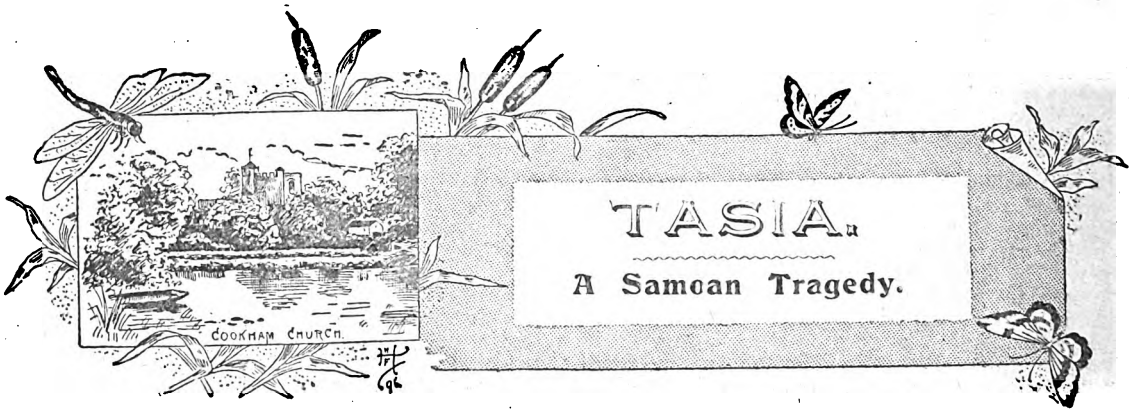
"Look here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody—anybody at all—except the horse?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet, and walked rapidly down the road towards the valley. H. T. P.



I HAD stopped for a day or two at the town of Apia on my way back to my home at Satu, far away from Apian civilisation. I had strayed in the direction of the little building that does duty for a police-court, and curiosity impelled me to enter.

At a shabby little desk sat a young Englishman, who was acting as magistrate; in front stood a native constable in charge of a female prisoner.

She was a fine, well-built woman. Her costume consisted only of a scanty white garment, which had probably belonged to some European lady. She had a necklace of red berries, and her jet-black hair—which reached down to her waist—was adorned with red blossoms.

"Back again, Tasia?" asked the magistrate kindly.

"*Tofa, my fieni,*" sang the prisoner in the most unconcerned manner. The crowd of brown-skinned natives, inside and outside the court-house, laughed merrily. The magistrate had some difficulty in preserving fitting judicial gravity.

The words formed part of a Samoan song, which, although of recent introduction, could be heard in any part of the group of islands. They mean "Good-bye, my friend," and the song was an expression of regret at the departure of a friend, but was sung on any occasion when a pretext could be found for singing it.

"She's been like that for a week, night and day, Alii," explained the constable. "She makes such a noise that her relatives won't have her in the house."

Considering that the Samoans are the most vociferous of people, this was rather a strong condemnation. The magistrate looked puzzled; there was no charge against the woman, the constable had taken her to the court because he did not know what to do with her. After having reflected, the magistrate decided to commit her to prison for a month for disorderly conduct.

"She will be well treated among the women," he explained, "and by that time her relatives may relent."

When I returned to Satu, I told a friend of mine, an old trader, the incident of the police-court at Apia, among other events of my journey.

"So you saw Tasia, did you?" he said with a smile. "Poor Tasia!"

I was not surprised that he knew the woman; he knew everybody.

"What is the matter with her?" I asked. "There is some story connected with her, I am certain, and I have no doubt that you know it. I should like to hear it."

"There *is* a story, and I will tell it to you," he replied, settling back in his rough chair. "It goes back to the time of the civil war among the Samoans—not many years ago, either. Apia was rather different then; you could have seen war parties marching through the town with the heads of slain enemies in their hands! Firing was going on everywhere, and occasionally a bullet from the bush just outside the town would come whizzing through the streets in a most unpleasant manner.

"But there were not many killed. The Samoans fired at anything that happened to be in front of them, whether it was a man's head or the trunk of a tree; but, as they scarcely ever hit the mark at which they aimed, the number killed by bullets was very small. There was a good deal of noise about their battles, but you couldn't exactly call them sanguinary; they had no idea of straight shooting.

"Tasia was not much of a beauty; but she was plump

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CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.
RAPID METHOD OF BANISHING SUPERABUNDANT FAT.

That procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many cases, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That in the majority of cases procrastination is easily curable is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," whose remarkable popularity is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process —a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method— of banishing their superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly-growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being requisite to ensure comely and comfortable slimness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding three penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury.*

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE.
A SPANISH COUNT REDUCES HIS WEIGHT 34LB. IN 22 DAYS.

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. There has recently been issued a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only threepence), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid — 'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos=*i.e.*, 34lb.' Another writes—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes—'I am just half the size.' A fourth—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes—'A reduction of 18lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says—'It reduced me considerably, not only in body, but all over.'" The author is very positive. He says—"Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations." — *Cork Herald.*

EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS
IN THE
TREATMENT OF OBESITY

Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto, yet notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending three penny stamps, a book entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals (British and Foreign) and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—Extract from *The Belfast News Letter.*

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and obliging, and, as she was the adopted daughter of a chief, she was of some importance.

"I was in Apia at the time of the trouble, helping in my friend's shop; we were very busy supplying the natives with salt beef and other things. Tasia used to come in the shop to buy various articles, and as I was always obliging—and an old man—she became very friendly with me, and used to tell me all about the warfare.

"Our friendship grew stronger, and sometimes when the shop was closed I went to the house where her father lived—I mean where he lived when he wasn't away fighting.

"Before the war broke out, Tasia had been engaged to an Aana chief. Everything was settled, and the two young people thought they were on the high road to happiness, when the internal trouble began. The result was that Tasia's betrothed was forced to fight against her people, and the chance of marriage became very remote.

"But that was not all. Tasia was afraid that her father and her betrothed would meet in some skirmish, which would mean the certain death of one. Her father, forgetful of Tasia's feelings, had vowed that he would decorate his door-post with the head of Inasi; while the latter had assured the weeping girl, at one of their secret meetings in the bush, that her father's head would undoubtedly become the trophy of one of their young chiefs. Her father was a great chief and a powerful opponent of the rebels, and the young warriors burnt with a desire to obtain his head.

"When I saw poor Tasia the next time, she had grown quite thin with grief. I tried to cheer her up. She burst into tears and confided her trouble to me.

"'If Inasi should kill my father,' she sobbed, 'he can never marry me. There would be a feud of blood between the families. And my father is already talking of marrying me to the chief of Malie.'

"In the rebel camp, Inasi was getting into hot water because he would not give up his love for Tasia. He was willing to fight against her people, that was his duty; but he was not bound to give up his love for his betrothed—he *could not* do it, he said.

"There was one thing lacking to complete Inasi's claim to the dignity of a bold warrior; he had not brought in a head. He had been in many skirmishes, and had fired off his gun so rapidly that the barrel had grown too hot to hold; but, although he may have killed some of the enemy, he had never brought home a head in triumph. The younger men began to sneer at him, and even the older ones became very serious about it.

"'Inasi has in his veins,' remarked an old chief at a council, 'the blood of our great ancestor Tooaau, who swam on a stick from Fiji to these islands. None of the race has ever before shown a lack of courage.'

"Inasi could not explain that he did not strive for the head of one of his enemies, lest it might be the head of Tolua, Tasia's father. But the shrewd old men understood how it was, and they finally hit upon a plan which would serve two ends. They called him before them.

"'Inasi,' the leader said, 'it is time that you proved your courage. It is our will that you bring us the head of our great enemy, Tolua. He is a foeman worthy of your steel!'

"Inasi's heart sank within him, but he knew that he must obey. Henceforth, however, life would have no joy or hope for him.

"The great battle took place, and the rebels were driven off. In the evening I went down to Tasia's home, where there was a great gathering of blood-stained warriors.

"I will not harrow your feelings with details of the ghastly trophies. I half closed my eyes as I made my way to Tasia, who sat in a corner, sad and silent, making the kava. That was a duty which devolved upon her as maiden of the family.

"'What is the matter, Tasia?' I asked.

"'My heart is heavy with a double burden,' she replied. 'My father has not returned from the battle; and I can hear no news of Inasi, save that he fought bravely, and slew many of our warriors.'

"Shortly afterwards a fitful blaze of the cocoa-nut shell fire illumined the interior, and I saw a dusky hand thrust through the matted side of the house. A round, reddened object was thrown violently into the circle of boasting chiefs.

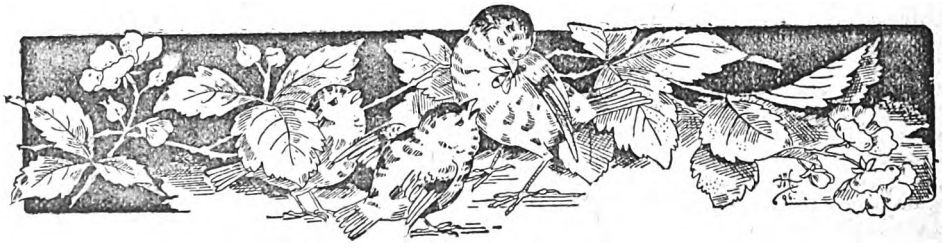
"'Inasi's last alofa to Tasia,' cried a loud voice.

"There was a sudden silence. Then the Samoans sprang to their feet, and rushed into the darkness in search of the intruder, leaving me alone with Tasia.

"The object had rolled along the floor, and stopped in front of the maiden. I looked at the thing, and a shiver went through me. I turned my eyes to Tasia. I had recognised the head of Tolua.

"She was gazing at it in horror. She did not scream; she did not utter a sound of any kind; but her hands dropped helplessly into her lap. The shock upset her reason, and she has never uttered a sensible word since.

"The same night a gunshot was heard within the rebel lines, and Inasi was found lying beside his rifle, which had rendered him this last service." G. D.



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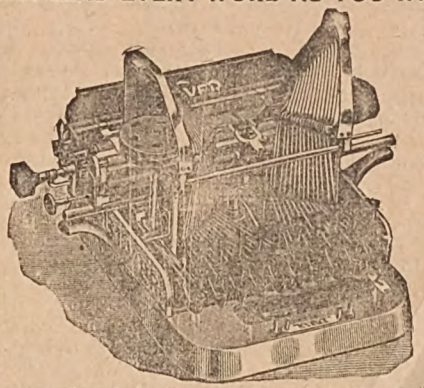

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LAST WRITTEN . . . . . FIRST READ.

All attempts in the great War Competition must be sent in by Tuesday next, June 14th. If you cannot solve all the pictures, do your best, for the prizes go to those who are most nearly correct, if no one gets the whole lot right. At the same time I should like to suggest that you inclose with your attempt a trifle for the Fresh Air Fund. A shilling postal order you won't miss very much, and it will more than cover all the expenses of a child's outing for one day. It is a good opportunity for you to show your generosity.

H. M. asks: "Which novel has had the largest sale during the last century?" ——— "Robinson Crusoe," by Daniel Defoe, published in 1719, and which is even now as popular as ever. Next in popularity come the Waverley novels, by Sir Walter Scott.

A. B. C.—Aerated bread is bread not fermented with yeast, but mechanically charged with carbonic acid gas.

Dolphin writes: "Can you tell me how to make an Æolian harp?" ——— Stretch eight or ten catgut strings of varying thickness, all tuned in unison, over a wooden shell or box, and place it in such a position that the wind would be able to pass between the strings. The sounds produced by the rising and falling of the wind in passing over the strings will be of a drowsy and lulling character.

G. H.—The original meaning of the word "insect" implies a division in the middle, like an ant. The meaning, however, has been extended, for it includes spiders, which have no division in the middle.

Bay.—According to those people engaged in the corn trade, twenty per cent. more bread is consumed in cold weather than when it is mild.

R. G.—Yes, the Queen has the right to pardon a condemned person of her own free will without consulting anyone, but although the right exists, according to constitutional usage, it is never exercised without the advice of the Home Secretary.

A. T.—The sound of the human voice can be heard at a great distance in the Arctic regions. Captain Parry states that he often heard the voices of persons conversing in an ordinary tone at the distance of a mile. It is evident that, even putting aside other inconveniences, the North would be quite unsuitable for a honeymoon trip.

E. A.—It certainly is not correct to write upon a post-card a communication requiring an answer. Probably that is the reason you did not receive one.

Dilemma.—The British Navy is certainly far ahead of any other nation so far as the number of its torpedo-boat destroyers are concerned, having no fewer than ninety-seven, whereas Russia, who comes second in this respect, only possesses twenty-nine, and France comes third with eighteen.

W. S. T. asks: "Is it correct to call the lucky owner of ten millions a 'billionaire'?" ——— No; that is quite a wrong idea. In order to be a billionaire a man would have to possess a million millions.

Pumice Stone.—The bulk of this material comes from the Lipari Islands, and the trade in it was done almost exclusively from Leghorn. But the islands are nearer to Sicily, and Messina is wresting the trade from Leghorn. By their activity the people of the latter place secured for themselves several industries which could have been done better from some other town; now, in the general awakening of Italy, the Livornesi are losing them. The price of pumice stone varies; as much as £30 per ton has been paid for the superior kinds.

Fair, Fat, and Forty.—The average length of a person's life in this country is about forty-three. Do not be alarmed, however. Remember the average is brought down considerably by the tremendous mortality amongst infants.

L. K.—The estimated number of blind persons in Europe is 302,000 in round figures. Of these, 192,000 are subjects of the Tsar; that is, one out of every 500.

Gold.—Some years ago a number of careful experiments were made to ascertain the loss by wear in coins of the realm during a given period. The conclusions arrived at included the following. In 100 years a like number of sovereigns lost £3 9s. 8½d. of their value, while in £100 of half-crowns the loss was £13 11s. 8½d. I give these details on the authority of other people; such few sovereigns and half-crowns as find their way into the editorial possession do not stay there long enough to enable me to make any reliable experiment on my own account.

S. S.—Sedan chairs were first seen in England in 1581, but it was not until sixty years later that they came into general use. One used in the reign of James I. by the Duke of Buckingham caused great indignation, and the people exclaimed that he was employing his fellow creatures to do the work of beasts. In 1634 Sir Francis Duncomb obtained the sole privilege to use, let and hire a number of such covered chairs for fourteen years.

F. A. R.—No, the Queen has never visited any of her colonies, nor any part of Asia, Africa, or America.

B. N.—The delicious drink known as "pulque" is obtained from a plant called maquez. It grows in the uplands of Mexico, 7,000 feet above the sea level, and it is also found in the plains near Apam, about sixty miles from the city of Mexico. One plant will yield about twelve pints a day. A legend concerning pulque is to the effect that it was first extracted by a Toltec of the royal blood, who, wishing to obtain favour in the king's eyes, sent him a quantity by the hand of his daughter. The king tasted the drink, and was so delighted with it that he graciously consented to keep the quantity sent; he also decided to keep the daughter. It is to be hoped that the Toltec obtained the favourable notice which he desired.

Left.—In fifty-four cases out of 100 the left leg is stronger than the right: Which shows that when you are told to put your best foot forward, the left foot is the right one for the purpose.

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In all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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When you can get a real safe remedy like KAPUTINE?

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

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All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

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'NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.'

This little prayer of our childhood, so simple, so direct, so full of unquestioning faith: what an innumerable multitude of children have said it at their mother's knee for generations out of mind, what a white-robed host of them are saying it now—night after night as bed-time comes round.

Lots of us oldsters, whose heads are grizzled and grey this New Year's Eve, remember when this tender petition was taught us as though it were but yesterday. In fact, I hope we are not ashamed to repeat it now. The great American statesman, Daniel Webster, never laid his head upon the pillow without having first uttered aloud this infant orison, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

And—so far at least as concerns the children—they *do* sleep. Not a quiver in their healthy nerves, no haunting persistence of the day's troubles, no fear for any the morning may bring. They do what they lay themselves down to do—*they sleep*.

But when one lays himself down and cannot sleep; when, the mind being full of thought, every faculty remains at "*Attention!*" like a file of soldiers on drill; or when Pain fills the bed with thorns—ah then there is another tale to tell. Whistle for your dog and he comes; whistle for Sleep and he mocks you as he flies away.

Preliminary to sound and healthful sleep there must be at least five conditions: First, fatigue of the nervous system; second, certain changes in the state of the blood; third, a cessation of all things which stimulate the nerves; fourth, an exhaustion of the attention; fifth, freedom from pain.

Now here we have Mr. Hunt, of Derby, telling us that for a long time together he was often obliged to leave his bed in the night and walk about the room. When we ask him why, he answers with the following letter:

"For many years," he says, "I suffered from indigestion and dyspepsia. I had no relish for my meals, and after eating, was taken with pain about the chest and shoulders. I was constantly belching up a sour acid fluid, my food turning sour on my stomach. *I was frequently so bad in the night with pain that I had to get up and walk about the room.* I was never laid up with my ailment, but never free from pain. For years I continued like this, the doctors' and others' medicines doing me no good. One day I read in a book about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Roe, Temple Street, and after taking it found much benefit. I persevered with it and all the pain and discomfort left me. Since then, by taking an occasional dose, I keep free from my old complaint. You can publish this statement as you think fit. (Signed) E. Hunt, 3 Provident Street, Derby, November 27th, 1896."

"The people of America," says an eminent physician of that country, "have already gained for themselves the reputation of being a nation of dyspeptics; they are fast becoming a *nation of poor sleepers*. Indeed, dyspepsia and insomnia are quite commonly associated in the same individual."

There you have it in a fistful of words. Our friend Mr. Hunt lost his sleep because he was unable to digest his food. A double loss, as you will see. A loss of sleep and a loss of the strength he would had were it not for the perverted state of things in his stomach which transformed his bread and meat into forces that tortured him and threatened his life. A fearful sleep-killer is this same old dyspepsia. It cares nothing for all your cries and prayers. Men and women have committed suicide in the mental wildness and delirium produced by it. It tears the nerves as a tiger's claws might shred the skin.

One point now, and mark it well. If you suffer from the insomnia of dyspepsia don't take opium in any form; don't take the tempting bromides; don't take any drugs to make you sleep, for they merely cause dull unconsciousness, stupor—but *not* physiological sleep. Let 'em all alone. Take Mother Seigel's Syrup, which will cure the digestive trouble, and *then*, when you lay yourself down to sleep, you may enter that soft oblivion wherein Nature repairs the losses of the day—even as it is with little children.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 494. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 18TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

"FROMMS"

"A COMPLETE FOOD" LANCET

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Design No. 847. Design No. 885.

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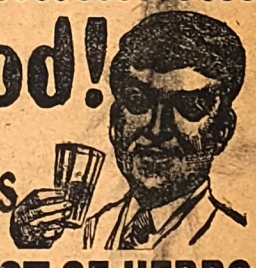

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NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

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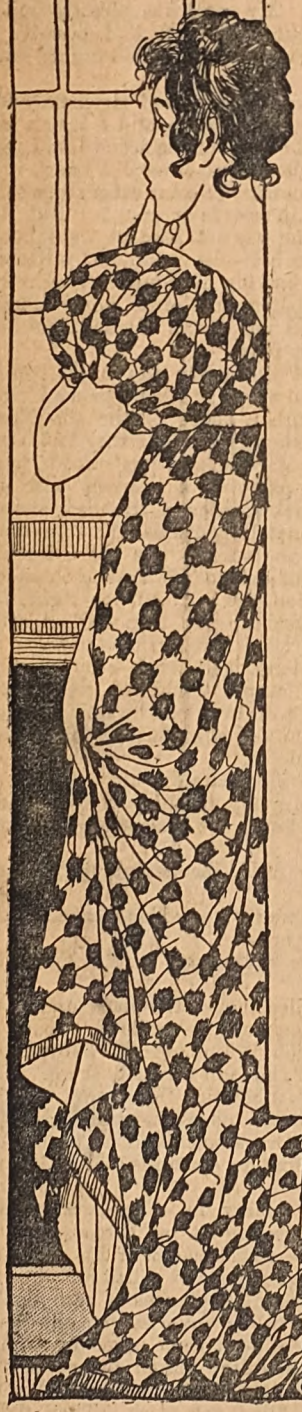
SHORT STORIES

No. 494. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending June 18th, 1898.



- TWO - MIDNIGHT DUELS.

"TO-NIGHT," said Trethowan, leaning back in his chair, "is the twelfth anniversary of the most horrible affair I ever had the misfortune to be drawn into. At any rate, to me it was horrible; doubtless there are men who would go through it without dreaming such awful dreams as I did for months afterwards.

"I was in with rather a wild set during my student days in Paris. Although we worked hard, we lived as fast as our resources would permit. Certainly, there were few luxurious vices in our list of follies. Amongst us was a Bordelais who was studying anatomical drawing under Mallesherbe. He was a quiet fellow, one of the melancholy sort; tall, awkward, thin, with straight black hair, but with the finest grey eyes I have ever seen in a man, and clear-cut lips that, in parting, showed white, perfect teeth. He was far from handsome; altogether a man to excite a smile at first, but afterwards, to compel one's admiration.

"We called him by no other name than 'The Bordelais,' and that term must do now, for, as you will understand, I cannot in honour disclose his identity. He and I became to a certain extent friendly—that is to say, we frequented the same *brasserie*, visited each other occasionally, and, as far as possible, worked together.

"There was one man we met very often—Jules de Cassagnac, a man whom we both detested. He was gentlemanly enough in manner, fascinating, accomplished, but what little I knew of his real life would not bear public scrutiny. In short, he was a type of those polished, educated blackguards who spare neither man nor woman in their search for gain and pleasure.

Edited By G. Arthur Pearson

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"As I have said, his record was black even for the Rue des Écoles, but he found most of us willing to shelve it for the sake of his agreeable society and sparkling conversation. And he had not that fault that is worse than a crime to the wild students of Paris—meanness. In fact, he was rather too fond of the *rôle* of '*Le Grand Seigneur*,' and spent his money prodigally.

"Of course, having no personal grievance against the man, neither the Bordelais nor I could be other than polite to him. Even Bohemia has its conventions. And so when Paul Deschamps, one of our best friends, gave his farewell dinner, we naturally accepted the invitation, though we knew De Cassagnac would be there also.

"No need to describe a students' dinner party. You know yourself the laughter and noise, the jests, songs, speeches—the boundless gaiety that springs from the free life and animal spirits of Bohemia, when youth colours everything with the rosy tint of its own swiftly flowing blood.

"We sat late into the night amid the mad enjoyment and uproar. Two o'clock had struck from the tower of St. Sulpice. Deschamps was already asleep in his chair, crowned with an enormous paper cap and robed in serviettes by those about him. Toasts were being drunk, faces were growing flushed and hands unsteady. I heard De Cassagnac's deep voice alternating with another's as they discussed their respective skill with the pistol. As for myself, between the champagne, curacoa, and sweet wines, and the bright eyes of the little grisette next me, I was perfectly happy and oblivious to all but the intoxication of the moment.

"Suddenly there was a lull in the laughter and talk; then a dead silence. I looked up in surprise. All eyes were fixed on the Bordelais. He had risen, his face white as the cloth before us, and was standing as one dazed, clutching a wineglass tightly in his hand. He strove to speak, but only a hoarse murmur came from his dry, colourless lips.

"What had happened, I asked myself; and the suddenness of it sobered me at once. I saw his horrified gaze was fixed on De Cassagnac, who sat perfectly self-possessed with a curious, questioning look on his face.

"The Bordelais slowly drew back his hand, as if to hurl the glass across the table. Then the cold, cynical eyes opposite snapped, and the man's teeth set tightly. He was a duellist to the backbone, and the fighting blood rose and dyed his temples faintly as he awaited the insult. A second or two of suspense, and his lips relaxed into a disdainful smile as the Bordelais replaced the glass, and walking heavily to the door, left the room without a word.

"It was useless to try and ascribe any reason for his actions, and De Cassagnac himself could not, or would not, even guess at the motive for such conduct. In a little time the party gradually thinned out, leaving only one or two *bon vivants*, who still held to their bottles. There was no restoring the mirth and carelessness that had been so suddenly checked.

"I walked back slowly to my rooms with a student of the Sorbonne, who had sat next to De Cassagnac during the evening.

"'What was the fellow saying,' I asked, 'that could have caused such an explosion?'

"The student raised his eyebrows.

"'We were speaking, as near as I can remember,' he said, 'of duelling. Ah, yes; he was telling us of an affair he had once fought in the garden of a house outside Bordeaux—in the dark, too. He and his opponent aimed by the mark their lighted cigars afforded. A strange way of fighting! De Cassagnac hit his man in the throat, and prides himself upon the shot. My faith—Bordeaux—they call your friend the Bordelais! Perhaps——'

"But I heard no more. My mind was already building up theories to account for what had passed; I abstractedly bade my companion 'Good-night,' and hurried on.

"The remainder of the night passed sleeplessly for me. The excitement kept me awake, and I lay on my bed wondering what would come of the scene I had just witnessed. The Bordelais was no coward, I knew, and either an apology was necessary or some other steps that would find their climax in swords or pistols. But the next day to my surprise he was not seen at the schools or the cafés. I called on him—he would not unfasten his door. The *concierge*, shaking his white head gravely, informed me that his lodger had come home almost insane, had neither eaten nor drunk all day, but had kept himself locked in his room.

"Those who were of the party the night before summed it all up in three words: 'Drunk or mad,' and dismissed the subject with a shrug of the shoulders. Their dinner had been interrupted, and they had been annoyed; they had been startled, and were not to have the recompensing excitement of a quarrel with its inevitable result, so they felt aggrieved. But as it was all over, and they had slept on it, they dismissed it from their minds. I was by no means sure it was over; I could not think my friend cur enough to hide himself to escape the consequences of his conduct. And I was right, for in the evening, as I turned up the Rue d'Orsel, after leaving one of the *brasseries*, I met him face to face.

"He was hurrying along, and as I stopped him beneath the glare of a lamp, I could see great, dark rims round his eyes and a drawn look on his face, that told of a terrible night and day of suffering. He seemed to have gone utterly to pieces.

"'Come with me,' he said harshly, not replying to my greeting. "If you are my friend you must come with me. I—don't stand still, for Heaven's sake; walk with me—I can't——'

"He paused in his hurried, incoherent speech, and tried to steady himself.

"'Where is De Cassagnac?' he suddenly asked, when we had proceeded some yards.

"'I saw him a little while ago in the Café des Etudiants.'

"We turned in the direction of the place, and as we reached it my companion asked—'ordered' would be the better term with which to describe the abrupt tone and phrase—me to see if the man was still there. Yes, he was there, sitting at a table with Deschamps. When I returned to the Bordelais his excitement increased, and for some moments he stood literally trembling. Then with a powerful effort he controlled himself, and walked into the café.

"He singled out his quarry in a moment, and I thought he would have sprung at his throat, but the glare passed from his eyes; still master of his emotions, he took a seat at the same table, and called for wine.

"Deschamps and I exchanged glances of recognition, but nothing more. The two adversaries (no one could doubt that they were such) eyed each other in silence. In a moment or two the waiter placed before us two glasses and an opened bottle, and when he had withdrawn, my friend slowly filled one glass. Then fixing

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his eye full on De Cassagnac, he, by an awkward movement, upset it, sending a stream of Chambery over the hand of his enemy as it rested on the table.

"De Cassagnac bit his lip. 'Monsieur has had the misfortune to wet my hand with his wine,' he said, with constrained politeness. The Bordelais filled the second glass. De Cassagnac spoke again: 'Monsieur will apologise;' and under the words lay the threat that showed the game they were playing. The other took no notice, but commenced refilling the glass that had been overturned. Now his opponent was before him he had become as cool as ice. Then the man opposite raised his hand and flicked some drops of wine insultingly across the table. Quick as thought came the retaliation—the second glassful right in his face.

"He had on his lips the smile of a demon as he wiped the wine from his eyes, and rose to his feet. 'Deschamps, act for me!' he cried.

"The Bordelais drew me aside. 'Complete my obligations to you, my friend, and arrange this for me. To-night—midnight—and above all things, we fight with pistols and aim by the light of each other's lighted cigars—no other light mind. You will find me at my rooms.'

"It was now nine o'clock, and Deschamps expostulated against the short time for preparation. But events had hurried themselves along so rapidly that I cared for nothing but getting it all over while we were in hot blood. The fight could not be avoided, and my principal, though firm enough to-night, his nerves strung to the utmost tension, would probably break down entirely by the morning. So I carried that point. But on mention of the condition of darkness, Paul Deschamps shook his head resolutely. 'You cannot be in earnest,' he cried. 'Lanterns, torches, if you will, but—*Mon Dieu!* We have a right to refuse.'

"'There is no unfair advantage to either,' I returned. 'It is deadlier than by flickering torchlight, perhaps, but less dangerous than by daylight.'

"'But it is not the custom; it is unheard of.'

"I remembered that Deschamps had been asleep during the scene at the dinner, and, indeed, it was only now that the words of the student of the Sorbonne came to my mind—'they aimed by the mark their lighted cigars afforded.' Some mystery lay behind it all, and I would see if De Cassagnac knew more than he would acknowledge.

"'It is not unheard of,' I said. 'Consult your principal. Tell him his adversary wishes to fight as the duel in the garden of the house outside Bordeaux was fought.'

"With a perplexed frown on his forehead, Deschamps went slowly across to where De Cassagnac stood, and spoke to him. The duellist looked up quickly and stared across at me. His hand trembled slightly as he curled his moustache mechanically, then, hastily nodding, he moved away.

"'It is agreed then,' said his second reluctantly, and we proceeded to the arrangement of some minor points.

* * * * *

"As our boatman rowed us down the Seine, all was dark except that, behind, in the sky, the lights of Paris threw a luminous haze, and far up the river the lamps on the quays faintly twinkled. Ahead we heard the plash of oars also making for the Ile de la Grande Jatte. The wind swept down the river, cutting like a knife. I threw my cloak over the Bordelais, fearing lest, in spite of his heavy paletôt, the cold would render his aim untrue. He did not move, but looked steadfastly into the blackness. The moaning wind and river, the motionless figure by my side, the silent boatman—these, and the darkness before us, in which lay life or death, thrilled me with unspeakable horror. It was like the passing of ghosts into the nether world.

"I could not see the face of the man beside me, but I felt that if I could it would be that of a doomed man.

"Presently the boat grated on the gravel, and we sprang ashore and hastened up the bank. Our opponent was already in his place with his second and another person whom Deschamps introduced as Doctor Fauchet.

"Then the Bordelais broke silence for the first time. 'Monsieur,' he said to De Cassagnac, 'one, perhaps both of us, will never leave this ground alive. I have something to say to you privately, if these gentlemen will permit. You will be perfectly safe, monsieur,' he added, as the other hesitated.

"'Ah, monsieur, I do not fear you,' rejoined De Cassagnac, stung by the taunt, and the two walked aside.

"Deschamps and I paced off the ground by lantern light, and when our principals returned the pistols were chosen and the duellists took their positions silently.

"Two little flames sprang up and died out again, leaving the full red circles that marked the human targets behind them. As the match on my left flamed up, the face of our opponent, I fancied, was pale, and I thought I saw his lips quiver. It may have been that the flickering shadows deceived me. Indeed, I was in no fit state to notice anything; my heart was beating heavily, and a cold shudder was creeping over me.

"No light now but the two glowing circles, growing slightly fainter. Above the dismal rustling of the trees Deschamps' voice rang out, but with a tremor in it—'One! Two! Th——' but ere the last word could be spoken De Cassagnac's pistol cracked, and the gleaming cigar on my right fell to the ground, scattering a small shower of sparks. A quick, indrawn breath told me that the bullet had struck home.

"I sprang forward. Deschamps cried out at the cowardly shot, and then the Bordelais pistol spoke also, and De Cassagnac staggered, went down with a crash, headlong.

"The lantern was hurriedly relit, and while Doctor Fauchet leant over the dead man, my friend put his hand on my arm. 'Take me away,' he said, between his teeth, 'lose no time.'

"'You are wounded?' I cried.

"'No, no; but be quick.'

"And so we left the two men kneeling over the dead one, and in a few minutes were out in midstream.

"When at length we got into the light of the quays, I saw that a handkerchief was wrapped round the Bordelais' left hand, and from it thick sluggish drops of blood were falling. But he persisted in going straight to his rooms, and once there, he fell into a chair fainting.

"My first thought, on his recovery, was to get a doctor for his wounded hand, but he started up in alarm at the mention of it.

"'No, for God's sake, no!' he cried. 'Do you think I want my shame known to all? I have acted to-night as only a cur, a coward, an assassin could act. You—or someone—cried out in reproach when the dead man's shot was fired before its time. You would have left me without a word if, through the darkness, you could have seen my murderous trick—ay, a cunning trick, the vile

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deceit of the gambler playing with marked cards—I am a coward.'

"I stared at him, believing the awful night's trial had turned his brain. Great drops of sweat stood on his brow; he was in agony.

"'Look,' he said, unwrapping the bandage. Without wincing, he tore it off, and picking up a pen from the table, held it between the fingers of the wounded hand, as one might hold a cigar, but at a distance from his body.

"'Do you think I did not know De Cassagnac would attempt to kill me ere I could fire? I knew it when I told him before we fought the real reason for my seeking a quarrel. I feared I should not have time to kill him, and I held the light—so—in my hand. You see his bullet would have been in my throat, but I tricked him. He struck my wrist only, and left me my revenge!'

"He paused; his hand fell to his side powerless with the strain he had put upon it, and the wound began to bleed fast. Refusing all assistance, he spoke again rapidly.

"'And now for what little excuse I have to make. I am disgraced, if not in the sight of Paris, in my own eyes, but I value your good opinion and want you to know my reason for this treachery.

"'When I was a boy I lived with my father, sister and brother, in a house near Bordeaux. Our mother was dead. One night I lay awake and heard a faint cry come from my sister's room, followed by the deep murmur of men's voices. With cautious haste I slipped on my clothes, listening all the time, and then I distinguished, as I crept to the door of the room, that one voice was my brother's. I heard the window open, and presently there came two heavy thuds on the ground beneath as if the men had leapt out.

"'Hearing no cry for help and knowing Felix, my brother, was there, I thought there was no need to raise an alarm, but crept through the house silently, and down into the old garden. I heard them making their way over the fallen leaves and branches rotting on the ground, and then they came to a halt. "I would have shot you on the spot but for the scandal and my sister's name!" my brother cried hotly in reply to something the other had said. "But we cannot fire in the dark," was the objection. The man evidently wished for delay. "Then we will fire by the light of a match—anything—or at arm's length, the pistol muzzles touching each other's breast—you shall not escape me—and the third stroke of the church clock shall be the signal. It is nearly the hour now." "Let us smoke, then, the few minutes we have to live," the stranger responded coolly. And then followed a proposal to fight by the light of their cigars, as we fought to-night. I lay still on the ground, not daring to move, for I feared my brother's anger. Slowly the church clock struck one, the pistols clicked two, and then, as to-night, came one solitary shot. Felix fell, shot in the throat; his murderer fled. My sister entered a convent, never divulging the name of her lover.

"My father's grief killed him, and I was left, a boy of twelve, the only survivor of the ruin the unknown betrayer and assassin had made. Then an aunt took me to live with her, and I adopted her name. Later, I came to Paris. Last night, for the first time since my brother's death, I found the man who had killed him. I could not challenge the murderer before that mad crowd.

"Everyone would have seen some connection between it and De Cassagnac's story, and perhaps the very secret to save which Felix died would have been common property through my enemy's biting tongue. I lost control of myself then; but still De Cassagnac did not know the truth—that I was the brother of his victim—until he could do no harm——'

"The Bordelais' voice was growing weaker; he could scarcely speak above a whisper, and it seemed an effort for him to phrase his words correctly; he spoke slowly and laboriously.

"Still he went on. 'And so, knowing the foul shot he made ten years ago, I could not trust him, and I—I tricked him, as I told you. There—there is my confession; you know my shame. You will keep my secret? And now, go for the doctor, my friend. But first, can you shake me by the hand and say "Goodbye," if we never meet again?'

"We never did meet. When I returned, a lifeless body lay in the chair. He had bled to death."

WALTER ROTHWELL.

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No. 1.—THE MAN WHO THOUGHT HIMSELF IMMORTAL.

THERE was once in the country which lies beyond the Great River a king whose name was Red Arm. He was a man proud of heart and fierce to look upon, so that all the people feared him greatly.

A glance from his eye could dry up the marrow in the bones and the blood in the veins, could shrivel the skin and shrink the sinews.

When he lifted up his voice in anger the trees in the forest trembled, and the beasts cowered in their lairs. His speech was like the sound of many trumpets, and could be heard across mountains and deserts; and no man dared question the power of his might.

All that land acknowledged him for Lord, and by the people on its borders he was called the King of the Terrible Countenance. But his own people called him Red Arm; for his right arm to the elbow was red like crimson from his birth, which the soothsayers declared to be an omen; affirming that, though he would spill men's blood himself, yet would his own blood never be spilt by them, since no weapon that was wielded by man would ever prevail against him.

So King Red Arm grew mightily in power and dominion, increasing in arrogance with each fresh demonstration of the soothsayer's discernment, till he believed himself to be coequal with the gods, and would have men do honour to him as to an immortal.

Now the fear of Red Arm was exceeding great in Utkala, the glorious country, where for 1,700,000 years, while the whole earth was virtuous, the gods loved to dwell.

The fame of his armies was echoed even in the den of the tiger and the home of the snake. It had travelled down the Sacred River; and everywhere, North and South and East and West, men spoke in whispers of the giants and magicians who followed the fortunes of the Red Arm. And the proud king, the Lord of the Terrible Countenance, when this was told him, laughed loud in the pride of his heart, and said: "In all the earth there is none like me—none. 'Tis I and no other who am Lord of the World, and all people shall bow down and do homage before me."

Then, swearing by his head, since he believed in none greater than himself, he said that he would go down to Utkala, and possess himself of the "Land without Sin," seize the temple, slay the priests, carry off the jewels and, in place of the ancient figure of the Great One, set up an image of himself.

Having issued his orders to his officers, Red Arm went to hunt in the woods, and soon started an antelope—a creature of most lovely shape, but of such incredible swiftness that, though he pursued it the whole day, he was unable to capture it.

At last, tired out with the chase, he threw himself from his horse to rest. Then he perceived that he was alone, and in a part of the forest that was quite strange to him.

For a moment he thought of raising his terrible voice to summon his attendants, but at that instant he caught sight of something shimmering amongst the banyans. Grasping his spear he waited, expectant. Something was certainly moving behind the trees. Was it the antelope? No antelope that was mortal, assuredly. Such a flashing of light, such a ripple of sheen, could proceed from no wild denizen of the waste. The *Rakshas?* No, the evil spirits sent forth by Shitan* after the sun went to rest, were dark and dusky; only their eyes glowed like balls of fire through the blackness of the night.

While he was still wondering what it might mean, there emerged from the jungle the most beautiful apparition that his eyes had ever beheld—a woman clad in the lightest of muslins, and loaded with jewels.

Pearls and diamonds glittered in her hair; on her arms she wore bracelets of priceless worth; bell-bangles of gold adorned her ankles, and a girdle of rubies encircled her waist. Her face shone with the peerless beauty of the moon when at the full, and the loveliness of her form and features surpassed all that the heart of man can imagine or conceive.

Moving without noise, save for the music of her anklets, she made straight for the place where Red Arm, too astonished to rise, was still sitting.

"Listen, great King!" said she. "I am Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity. 'Tis I you have been pursuing. Under the form of an antelope I have kept you at full stretch till the shadows have begun to lengthen and the mists to rise. But you have spent your strength for naught. You have succeeded only in wearing out yourself—I have eluded you. And now the night is coming down, and the mighty Red Arm, who through the long day has been the fool of Fortune and the sport of Fate, is left at the mercy of the servants of the Evil One. Who forsake the gods, O King, the gods themselves forsake.

"Who would be equal to the Great Ones must stoop to the level of the least. That is a lesson which princes must learn in the school of kings, and the king who forgets it must learn his lesson at the hands of the gods.

"Behold me, Lakshmi! Am I not good to look upon? Have I lost any part of the divinity which makes me the equal of the Greatest, because erstwhile I appeared to thee in the form of one of the lowest? Learn, proud man, that thou, too, art mortal, though no stroke dealt by human hand hath power to slay thee.

"And think not, O King, that 'tis of thine own will that thou doest this or that; but remember that he who will not serve Nárráyan must serve Shitan. And now, O Son of the Earth! listen, and take heed! I have a message from Devi unto thee; and here, under the *neem* tree, must it be delivered.

"It was Devi who marked thee with the crimson

* The Devil.

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stain; and, by no man, O King! can thy blood be spilt. In yonder grove you will find her shrine. Go hither and pay thy vow. Offer her, without seeking to know what she would ask, the thing which she will demand; so shall Prosperity continue to attend thee in the way." With which words Lakshmi left him, and suddenly he was alone.

Now Red Arm would have followed Lakshmi even to the banks of the dread river which flows through the kingdom of Yama, for Lakshmi was all light and life and youthful beauty; but Devi, with the four arms and serpent tresses; Devi with the necklace of skulls and brimming goblet; Devi, the mad death-fury — he had no fancy to meet her at the lonely shrine in the banyan grove.

There emerged from the jungle the most beautiful apparition his eyes had ever beheld.

Moreover, he liked not the saying of Lakshmi, "Offer her, without seeking to know what she would ask, the thing which she will demand." There was no such pressing hurry about it, surely! The evil spirits would be flitting about now in the gloom of the wood. He would return on the morrow, in the broad daylight, when, if he had luck, he might see the antelope again.

Then looking about him and perceiving no trace of the visit of Lakshmi, it was not long before he persuaded himself that he must have fallen asleep and dreamt a dream.

So, mounting his horse, Red Arm made the best of his way back to the palace. As he rode up to the gates his son Prince Fazool ran to greet him. But the animal started, reared, and bringing his forefeet down heavily on the youth crushed the life out of him before the eyes of his father. At the same moment a peal of laughter that never came from human throat rang out clearly upon the air. For the first time in his life Red Arm trembled.

In the morning he rose up early and went off alone to the shrine in the wood. All day he searched for it without finding it. At last, worn out with searching, he sat down under a tree to rest. By-and-bye a bat flew into the tree and Red Arm called to it. "Bat, I have a vow to pay at the altar of Devi in the grove. I have a sacrifice to offer, but, alas! I am astray, and fear lest the anger of the goddess should visit me through my neglect. Canst thou not assist me?"

But the Bat said:

"And wherefore comest thou not sooner, O Son of an Earthborn Mother? Devi hath taken a sacrifice to herself, and her altar is removed from its place. It is not here thou wilt find her. But I have a message for thee, O King! The gods have fled from Utkala, and the land is open before thee. Rich booty awaits thee and great possessions. There, too, shalt thou find thy son. Go, seek him in the dwelling of the 'Best,' in the bosom of the Blue Mountain. Sword of man cannot hurt thee, and the gods themselves will make terms rather than see the Land of the Peaceful harried by the Lord of the Terrible Countenance."

Then Red Arm, believing the words which the Bat had spoken, went back to his people; and getting together a great army, took ship and sailed down the sacred river to Utkala, which is by the Great Sea.

But Lakshmi, who sped thither swifter than the eagle's flight, had warned the men of the city.

"Watch you," said she, "and when the sweepings of horses is seen on the water, and the litter of elephants is drifted on the shore, fly into the mountains with your goods and your treasure, and leave the gods to deal with the invader of their land."

So, when Red Arm arrived at the city, behold it was empty. Gnashing his teeth as he walked on the beach, he perceived great quantities of litter which had been thrown up by the tide. "Ha!" said he, smiting his forehead, "'tis this treacherous sea has betrayed us. It shall be punished."

Marshalling his army on the shore, he advanced in battle array against the ocean. The waves receded before him. For two miles they continued to recede, and Red Arm to advance. Then of a sudden they rose in their wrath, and surging in upon the proud, presumptuous mortal, swallowed him up—him and all his great army of 1,300,000 men.

But ere Red Arm sank beneath the angry water, he heard above the roar of the waves, the mocking laugh of Devi, and the harsh croak of the Bat.

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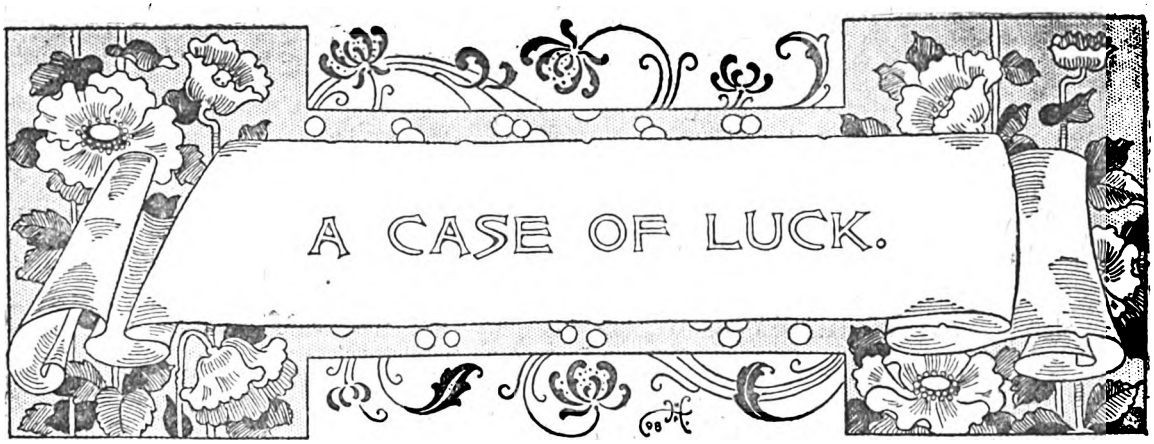

A CASE OF LUCK.

I had, of course, heard of Roland Gay, the detective. Most people had. But I had never come across him. I therefore considered myself fortunate when the waiter whispered to me that the quiet-looking person, dressed like an ordinary gentleman, who shared the coffee-room with me, was none other than the great Gay.

"What is he here for?" I inquired afterwards; for Mr. Gay seemed of a retiring disposition, and soon left me to myself.

"Goodness knows, sir!" returned the waiter.

I ought to have blushed for my innocence. It was not in the least likely that so astute a person would declare his business as openly as people ask for eggs for their breakfast.

Later in the evening, however, I had once more the good fortune to find myself alone with Mr. Gay. We were in the smoking-room of the hotel, he and I.

We had exchanged commonplaces, but nothing more. I felt that I was talking under false pretences.

"By the way," I said, "it strikes me as silly to pretend that I do not know who you are, Mr. Gay. I'm very glad to meet so famous a gentleman."

His smile was good to see. It came and went, however, with remarkable suddenness.

"Oh, well," he replied diffidently, "that's all right. I don't know that I'm altogether so sharp as the papers make me out to be. But I do my best."

"So I should imagine the rogues say whom you run to earth. Your profession must be one of the most exciting that a man can take up."

"Perhaps," he admitted.

"And the most satisfying."

"Far from that."

"Ah! but I am speaking of it in the hands of its leaders—men like yourself. Of course, an unskilful man must often have to groan over failure."

"Yes; but most people are that at first. None more than we, I should suppose."

"No!"

"Fact. Do you remember the Comrie case, fifteen or sixteen years ago?"

"The Comrie case?"

No; I remembered nothing at all about it. Could not even guess whether it was a case of murder or embezzlement.

"Well, then, I'll tell you about it, if you like," said Mr. Gay amiably, as became his name. "I ought to have it at my fingers' ends, for it made me. And yet I was never nearer being baffled than I was by that. Chance, good luck, or what you please to call it, that's the best friend a man in our profession has. He's a bundle of conceit if he thinks differently."

I signified assent to Mr. Gay's words, though, of course, I did not agree wholly with an opinion that robbed him so deliberately of the credit given to him by most people for his talent as a sleuth-hound.

"No, no," he said, shaking his head; "it's luck. The old heathens who made a god or a goddess of Fortune weren't so far out. But I'll tell you about the Comrie case, and you shall judge.

"The facts, briefly, were as follows: A rich old gentleman and his daughter lived in a big house in Lanarkshire. His name was Comrie. In his younger days he had travelled a good deal, and in his travels he had spent a large sum of money on gems, cut stones, and intaglios. His collection was one of the finest in Great Britain. It was valued at many thousands of pounds, and all kept in that country house of his. He took as much pride in the things as a mother in her only child, and wanted to have them near him to finger and handle.

"One morning, when I had been only two years in the force, news came that Mr. Comrie had been found dead in his library, and that a number of the gems were missing. Taylor, Mr. Comrie's valet, was also missing, and so was a woman named Farquharson, who was Miss Comrie's maid. Miss Comrie herself had gone away to some relatives, and had left her maid behind at the Grange, as the place was called.

"It seemed a pretty plain case, you see. Of course, the valet had killed his master and the maid was an accessory before or after the act. They had got off with their plunder, and it was our task to catch them.

"'An easy job for you, Gay,' said the chief, when he put me in charge of it. 'The man's young, and he's bound to be indiscreet, having a woman with him. In less than a week I expect you'll have them. Take my blessing and go.'"

Mr. Gay shook his head.

"That blessing," he continued, "didn't seem to do me much good. Of course, though, I was a bit handicapped by being rather late.

"This Mr. Comrie was in the habit of spending the evening in his library, where he was waited on by no one except Taylor; and he'd go to bed when he pleased at any hour, and not want his valet till he rang his bell at ten or eleven o'clock. You see, too, this

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library was really a private room for himself, and was only approachable through his bedroom, so that the maids weren't likely to be the first to see him. That arrangement was naturally for the protection of his precious stones and things, but I thought it a very bad plan when I came to the house and understood what a start those two had got through it.

"I didn't get down there till nearly two o'clock, and, for anything I could tell, the murder had been committed at eight or nine o'clock the evening before. In fact, that was so; the doctor's evidence confirmed it, and so did the coincidence that no one in the house had seen either Taylor or Farquharson after supper-time.

"It was not their showing up the next morning by nine o'clock, combined with Mr. Comrie's silence, that set the housekeeper first wondering, and then made her suspect something.

"Thus it was twelve o'clock or thereabouts before I could leave Glasgow for the Grange, and, as I said, two o'clock before I reached the house.

"That gave them a good start. An Anchor liner had left that very morning, and there were five passengers who had booked at the last moment, any two of whom, from the description, might have been my birds. Indeed, I was disposed to think they were trying that very tempting but hopeless way of escape. Eventually, though, information from the other side proved that I was wrong on that point.

"Those two had got off wonderfully well. No one for ten miles round had seen two persons even conjecturally answering the description. I could only suppose that they had schemed it out cleverly beforehand, arranged for disguises, and got to Glasgow about daybreak, holding their heads as high as honest folks. My chief agreed with me. I believe he was as disappointed as myself; but, knowing all, he could, he said, excuse my failure.

"It remained to be seen if they would betray themselves by means of their plunder. We were prepared for them on this score. There wasn't a jeweller in the country (I might almost say not a purchaser of that kind of antiques abroad) who was not warned about them.

"However, August came, and still we were quite in the dark. They had done away with Mr. Comrie early in June. You will see that it began to look as though they had got clean away.

"I worried myself almost to death about the affair. It was a terrible disappointment to me, and I had felt foolishly confident at the outset. All the while, though, I expect I was learning some grand lessons. And not the least of them was the need we have of being patient firstly, secondly, and lastly. The man who hasn't acquired a rare stock of that useful virtue won't do much in our business.

"And so, as I said, it was August, and I was about done up with anxiety and running about to no purpose.

"'Look here, Gay,' said the chief to me on the fourth of the month, 'you mustn't break down. You're something of a fisherman, aren't you?'

"I was, and confessed it.

"'Then you'll do me a favour by taking two or three weeks' holiday somewhere, and try some flies a fellow has sent me. I don't think much of them.'

"The dear old chap couldn't have offered me a bait more sure of hooking me. The very next day I was on board the *Clansman*, and trying my hardest to forget the Comrie murder.

"I didn't stop at Oban. I looked at the map and the 'Sportsman's Guide,' and chose the very remotest fishing-place I could. You don't know Barra, I suppose? Few people go there. It's just the southernmost of the outer Hebrides Islands, with two or three lakes chock-full of trout.

"There were only two visitors there—a middle-aged man with a black beard and a good-looking youth. They had been on the island for six weeks, they told me, and they excused themselves for their rather rough manner (so they said) on the plea of this isolation. Now, their manners were really not at all rough. The younger one was quite gentlemanly and pleasant, and the other was not more reserved than half the men one meets in travelling.

"I soon saw, however, that they did not care for my company. They never asked me to fish with them, and ate their meals apart from me. In the evenings, too, when most men chum over their pipes and Scotch, they left me to keep the smoking-room warm. To be sure, the younger one didn't smoke, but it seemed odd that they should avoid the room on his account.

"I hadn't been in Barra four days when I heard these men were going elsewhere. The landlord told me so, and I said I was glad to hear it.

"'They're not my sort,' I said, 'any more than I theirs, if I may judge from their manners.'

"Then the landlord, with a wink, let me into a secret that startled me.

"'Between ourselves, sir,' he whispered, 'one of 'em is a woman. They've got some game on, though I don't know what it is.'

"'Are you certain?' I asked. How my heart beat to be sure!

"'Well, one wears stays, I know that much!'

"That did not seem conclusive. But my professional instinct was now aroused, and, of course, the Comrie case rushed to my mind.

"'It is the unexpected that happens,' I said to myself.

"That afternoon I made up a little plan. If (as it might be) these two were *my* two, then the man's beard was false. I must test it.

"I made up a nice little arrangement of pike hooks set back to back—in all, three pairs of them. With these in my hand, I planned to go past Mr. Brown (as the elder man called himself) as he was sitting in the coffee-room ready for dinner. He was fond of the arm-chair, which facilitated matters. If my pike hooks in his beard did not strip him of his hair, I should be in for an abject apology with a vengeance!

"Ah, but it did, you know—or would know if you remembered the case. I ripped the whole thing off him, and recognised Taylor under Mr. Brown in an instant.

"The rest of the business was soon done. I had them both on board the *Staffa* the next morning. And didn't I get complimented at the head office and elsewhere for what was the purest accident in the world!"

Mr. Gay leant back contentedly.

I thanked him for his story, but did not agree with him that chance deserved all the credit in the Comrie conviction.

"You might have failed to get his beard off; you were not bound to identify them as Mr. Comrie's assassins, and——"

"Oh, but," said Mr. Gay, "when I learnt from the maid that never once had she seen their portmanteaux opened, I put two and two together."

"Which seemed the more to your credit," said I.

Arthur Stenson.

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THE CLOWN'S VENGEANCE.

A Tragic Tale of the Sawdust Circle.

That evening there was a great concourse of people on the Place de la Liberté. The Rosati Circus was giving its last performance, and the public of Toulon was flocking in crowds to this farewell representation. At the doors, beneath the flickering gleam of the rows of gas-lights, there was a ceaseless crush and movement; an endless line was slowly winding its way in, halting at every step and hammering the sounding planks with a confused clatter.

All around, on the notice-boards stuck in the ground, the colours of the flaming posters were displayed and, bathed in the garish light, dazzled the eye. In the crowd of spectators and idlers everyone was reading aloud the placard which stood conspicuous in front:

POSITIVELY THE LAST TIME
THIS EVENING.
LAST PERFORMANCES
OF
PRINCE ICARUS
(THE FLYING MAN),
OF
MLLE. RITA
AND OF
ÆSOP
(THE GRASSHOPPER CLOWN).

Within the circus the seats were already overflowing, and the same names repeated from mouth to mouth blended into a general murmur deadened by the canvas roof over the ring. Some of the circus-men were raking the sawdust on the track, and, above the door to the stables, the musicians were languidly tuning their instruments, or, at times, addressing friends who passed beneath the gallery. "That you, Marius? How goes it?" etc. In the upper rows the audience was alive with impatience for the expected spectacle, and irritated by the passing of the young fashionable "first-nighters"—envied frequenters behind the scenes—who pressed in a crowd to the narrow entrance leading to the green-room.

Officers in civilian dress, and students, ship-brokers and idle dandies, all wished for the last time to get near the fair Mlle. Rita, the celebrated equestrienne, who, for a month, had been the subject of conversation in every mess-room and every club. They stepped along, the elbowed and the elbowers, between the walls that were covered with sets of varnished harness, and begged pardon every time they jostled a groom.

They stopped at the stalls of Blue Devil and Djinn, the two trick Arabians, and, under pretext of giving some sugar to the horses, fluttered about the extemporized dressing-room where Rita, tranquil and smiling, was donning her attire. Then came in succession the commonplace compliments, to which the star of the circus, unheeding, scarcely deigned to give an answer, without seeming to note the ardent gaze of her admirers.

She was a handsome girl, a careless gipsy, with the sun in her eyes and her blood, accustomed to the atmosphere of admiration, and she finished her toilet without hurrying. At times however, impatiently, and with a pretty, rebellious movement, she gave her shoulders a shake and made the pearls of her necklace rattle.

It was when the little clown Æsop, her husband, who, all befloured and painted, was walking before the room, his huge top-knot swaying at every step, drew near, and with his sharp falsetto voice launched some taunt at the artist's courtiers. They laughed, they even applauded, but, more often, they lowered their eyes before the cutting, cold gaze of the dwarf, whose wan and grotesque face—in spite of the smile of the blood-red and two large lips—seemed at some moments to be fraught with evil.

This evening the mannikin was in worse humour than usual; his jeers were more biting and more bitter, and beneath the coat of flour covering his seamed features he appeared not pale but livid. His eyes had a sharp and menacing flash in them, and never left Rita, who, gayly posed before her mirror, was having her bodice laced by the handsome gymnast Icarus.

In the circus the orchestra was finishing a waltz by Métra. The curious were gradually quitting the stable and returning to their places. The sharp cuts of the ring-master's whip were cracking in the arena; the show had begun. Icarus placed a last rose in the hair of the

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equestrienne and ran to chalk her shoes. He stumbled against his dwarfish comrade.

The clown seemed very busy in examining the gas-meter, and pushed him away with an oath. Then, without more ado, the acrobat sent him reeling, and leaping on a ladder, cried, with a laugh, "Out of the way, you pitiful pigmy!"

Æsop uttered a roar of rage and anger, then suddenly calming himself, returned to the meter, and after having followed with an eye of hatred the ascent of Icarus, began fumbling with the mechanism of the stop-cocks.

A great clapping of hands. A frantic ovation. Two hundred pretty women dropped their fans, and levelled their opera-glasses, and, a trifle pale, smiled with a delicious dread. Icarus was up there—high up at the top of the circus—hanging to the last trapeze, and turning over and over in it, slowly and without an effort.

At times he paused, and his face was seen radiant in the foolish pride of triumph. Below, in the ring, the clowns were stretching a circular net, and in all the circus reigned deep silence broken only by a feminine whisper:

"How graceful! What a handsome fellow!"

The gymnast then, finding his public sufficiently warmed up, raised himself at one pull, stiffening himself on his wrists.

The trapeze, violently thrown back, described a great arc, and, letting go the bar, the man shot forward like an arrow into space.

There was a feeling of apprehension in the crowd, and an "Oh!" of affright uttered by a thousand throats. The acrobat reached the second trapeze, and calmly let himself swing in its decreasing oscillations.

Slowly he thus darted eleven times, calm and smiling as he made the tour of the circus, and rejoicing at feeling beneath him the immense panting of the throng.

At the eleventh trapeze he paused to prolong this emotion—his glory—and his eyes sought out Rita. The equestrienne saw him, and with the handle of her whip threw him a kiss.

The elated Icarus, hanging by one hand, saluted her; then he brought his trapeze to rest. He was about to complete his task.

"Enough," said some voices.

"No! Bravo! Encore!" cried the ladies, eager to feel once more the perverse joy of an enticing pain.

For the twelfth time the handsome gymnast, stiffening his muscular arms, essayed his terrible flight.

But an appalling cry of terror, a frantic shout arose.

In an instant, suddenly—like a candle put out by the flap of a bat's wing—the thousand glistening lights of the circus were extinguished all together, at the precise and fatal moment when the man was darting into space.

At the same instant there rose from the ring a laugh, terrible, vibrating with hate.

Then in the black and hideous obscurity, in the pitchy darkness that filled the circus lately so blazing, poignant shrieks rolled from row to row. Women fainted, and the spectators, with their hearts crushed in hopeless terror, shudderingly sat as if petrified in their places, and peered into the night that filled the dome. The net was empty, the acrobat must be looked for in the gloom. In the search, lanterns were brought and carried toward the top of the circus. Five minutes—five centuries, elapsed. Someone cried "Bengal lights."

Then, while here and there people were trying to relight the burners, a blaze of violet and red, of green and azure, flashed out and with a powerful illumination lit up at one flash every corner of the circus with its fantastic and trembling gleams.

And suddenly, as in the flames of a transformation scene, was seen, rigid, clamped to the trapeze, Prince Icarus, hanging motionless.

An unheard of horror paralyzed him in a supernatural frenzy. His hair stood erect. His distorted mouth grinned an idiot grin terrible to see, and in his face, whiter than that of a corpse, his haggard eyes, protruding from their sockets, rolled convulsively.

Soon his comrades were near him. With the handle of his knife Æsop struck the gymnast's hands, and with great difficulty detached from the bar the clenched hands of the miserable man.

The gas was relighted, and the crowd, silently and without a breath, watched, as it was slowly lowered down, the descent of the living corpse.

There is to-day near Marseilles, in the Asylum of Saint Pierre, a poor madman, who stalks straight forward, his arms held in front and contracted in an imaginary grip. It is a frightful sight. It is "Prince Icarus."

I do not know what jail holds Æsop. As to the fairy Rita, she is now a princess somewhere in Germany.—

Paul Bonnetain.

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BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII. (*continued*).

The *Hirosaki*, we have said, was undoubtedly the best engine of war that was ever devised and built. She was armoured with Harveyed nickel steel, and her belt, which extended from stem to stern, was over eight feet in depth, and nine inches thick throughout engine, boiler, and magazine spaces. Now, above this belt, her side to the height of the main deck was covered with 6in. armour for a length of some 250ft., inclosing two barbettes; while at each end of the belt there was a curved bulkhead, fourteen inches thick, between the armoured and main decks; so that a quite complete citadel, 250ft. long, was formed.

Her gun-casemates, moreover, were shielded both on the inner and outer sides, so that their crews worked under a protection almost ideal; while her barbettes, circular in plan, were protected with 14in. armour, rising to a height of 4ft. above the upper deck.

With such a tool of war something might be dared. Nearer she went, ploughing in impressive, squat haste, straight towards the middle of the interminable Japanese line; and while the rest of the British fleet were still beyond effective range, a sudden rain of shot fell from the military-tops of two cruisers upon her decks.

The *Hirosaki* did not answer.

With ripped decks and annihilated boats, on she went, straining her engines, every egress from the stokeholds being closed by the devoted men who toiled like salamanders in her depths.

Within two minutes from the opening of fire, a shell from the 32cm. gun of the *Akitsuschima* (one of the two ships at the point where Hardy aimed to break the enemy's line) had burst through the shield of the fore-barbette, killed or wounded all its crew, and disabled the turn-table.

And now a horror of wonder and consternation spread through the crew of the *Hirosaki*—at her strange silence—at her frenzied adventure.

Where was Hardy? Was he stricken dumb? Was he dead? Was he dancing mad?

An ashen-faced London barrister in one of the eight casemates of the 6in. quick-firers on the main-deck, gasped in a dry-throated whisper:

"He is dead!"

And Brassey, of Kiao-chau, ashen-faced also, gasped in answer:

"Bah! what are you talking about!"

The engines roared, the sea whitened, the *Hirosaki* walked grandly down an arcade of flame and smoke.

She had passed through the first line of the enemy betweeen two cruisers, the *Akitsuschima*, and the *Hasidater* which she could have sunk by a mere snarl of her broadsides. Yet she did not speak.

Before her came two more, the *Ten-rio*, and the *Takao*, and the two before and the two behind concentrated upon her their fires.

Everyone looked to see her sink; certainly, it was only a question of moments—of how many moments the fire continued from such close quarters. The outward appearance of the ship, by the time she reached the second Japanese line abreast, was one of mere ruin and havoc.

The enemy were as astounded at her conduct as her crew. But in a few instants they knew—they thought that they knew.

Twenty or twenty-two cables behind the second Japanese line came a ship of considerable size, alone—that is to say protected by the whole mass of her navy. Yet she was a ship of war.

As soon as the *Hirosaki* emerged from the world of coppery gloom into which she had passed, as it were, a living thing, to come forth, but for her central citadel and propelling mechanism, a dead—she turned her bows upon this ship.

The ship was the *Yoshino*; though powerfully armed, she was one of the ships called "unarmoured"; smoking over a map in her cabin sat Yen How.

Hardy had reached him! One well-directed shell, one happy torpedo, and, beyond doubt, the yellow host will be leaderless. . . .

And now, at last, the *Hirosaki* talks; but she talks in such a sorry, effete, and slip-shod manner, that a whole crowd of Japanese captains who are already hastening to the rescue of that one precious ship, laugh in their conning-towers. Was there ever such miserable aiming? such false sight? Not one of the shots takes effect. The *Yoshino* keeps on her way untouched. The rash *Hirosaki* has run that appalling blockade of flame in vain. And to complete her ignominy, immediately upon her first feeble effort, she turns tail, and goes blundering in defeated flight to the S.E.

She was evidently the flag-ship of the British, and the fact that she had reserved her fire in her passage through the fleet, and had then singled out, and fired upon, the *Yoshino*, proved to the Japanese that the British knew in which ship Yen How was borne, and that their one and only object in fighting now was the destruction of Yen How.

The one and only object of the Japanese must therefore be the protection of that one ship, the *Yoshino*.

It was in order that they might arrive at this very con-

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clusion, that Hardy had made his awful passage through their fleet, had abstained from firing,—and had fired upon the *Yoshino*.

It was his design that the enemy should be, above all things, anxious to protect her. And he used the *Hirosaki* for the adventure, because he knew well that no other ship at his disposal could have continued on her way two seconds through that flaming avenue.

But the on-lookers slandered the *Hirosaki's* crew in supposing them such very sorry gunners. The same mouth which had bid them fire had bid them miss. The *Yoshino* was needed.

"The *morale* of the fighters!" With the most astounding precision Hardy seems to have divined it. How much of his mind the enemy would guess, and exactly where their guessing power would cease, he appears by some divine

Smoking over a map sat Yen How.

instinct to have known infallibly. A European crew, knowing the fame of Hardy, and observing his present fatuity, might have surmised some design, all the more appallingly rough and rude in its results, in proportion to its consummate depth. The Japanese simply read the surface of his mind, and were proud of their reading.

They concluded that his main design was to destroy the person of Yen How—and it was—they were right. But his thoughts were as much beyond their thoughts as the heavens are beyond the earth.

He goes careering to the S.E., and three very swift cruisers that follow in chase he promptly sinks.

Yonder, at the front, the battle has begun, and a sound breaks out like the sound of ten million rocks clattering in rowdy degringolation down a wooden stair reaching from the moon to the earth. And see how, really, that is good for Hardy—native to the very temper of his mother's womb—the sole rough music in the universe which can make his great spirit *dance*! It would be hard now to recognise in him the gloomy, cowering, burdened wight, who, half an hour ago, groaned in the *Hirosaki* conning-tower. His exhilaration is boundless; his face is flushed. If it were possible, joy now would redye the hair which grief had blanched. Here is his element, his day—great *Thurs*day—and he, once more, Saxon Thor, red-handed, swinger of thunder-bolts, tosser of linked lightnings. He feels his arm, his soul, his ordination. He knows that he cannot fail.

He wheels:—the *Hirosaki*, left alone, is steering S.—S.W.—W.—then W. by N. What is left of the European fleet, thirty-five craft, most of them already gravely injured, have now changed places with the Japanese, they being to the east, and the Japanese to the west of them. Both sides put their helms down to reform and change. Only, a solid phalanx of twenty ships remain in guard about the *Yoshino* which is slowly forging ahead in her old direction.

The *Hirosaki* is signalling. The old starboard half of ships are to follow her in single file; the old port are to watch evolutions of the *Hirosaki*, and follow suit on their side.

Immediately the *Hirosaki's* bows turn a little to the south of eastward. Nineteen ships follow her with bows a little to the south of eastward. Sixteen ships follow with bows a little to the north of eastward. At the utmost speed of the craft of lowest power they steam away in these directions.

The yellow men discern that the white are flying. Or is it not rather a mere feint to get at the precious, guarded ship? Yes, that is soon evidently it! for the two files of retreating ships turn south and north, and then in wide curves westward. The Japs are after them.

Between the Europeans are intervals of not more than six cables. The crowd of Japanese come two abreast, the nearest two about a knot astern of the hindermost European. The *Hirosaki* leads the port European limb, the *Hero* the starboard.

The two hindermost Europeans in the two limbs are the Dutch corvette *Van Galen*, and the British-Japanese battleship *Fugi*; these are the only direct combatants, and are using stern-guns. In three minutes the *Van Galen* dives, and the *Fuji* cranks and stops. The British force is reduced to thirty-three.

So far not a single yellow ship has sunk. Five, in the first charge, have been disabled, and the rest only seriously injured by the destruction of unprotected crews. Hitherto they are victors twice and thrice.

They gain upon the retreating squadrons. The average of their speed is greater than that of the Europeans.

Suddenly, after four knots from the start, Hardy turns, and in a short inward curve comes back eastward. The starboard limb, with a short inward curve, follow suite.

And now it becomes quite clear to everyone on his side that whatever is his design, he is accomplishing it at a murderous, a disastrous cost. For as the ships come back, they present a long line of broadside to a still greater length of Japanese broadside—at horribly close quarters; and in the sudden, exclamatory, almost momentary, outrage of hell-fire which bursts from both sides, the ships sink fast. The gentlemen of England acquit themselves well, with precision, with tympana that do not quite burst, with brains that do not quite faint, with hands that do not fail. In that loud squall of wrath they send twenty Japanese and Chinese ships to their grave in the two limbs; and they themselves are nine the less. The Japanese can afford the loss. Not they.

And now, in a minute—so fast do they tear along—the hostile fleets are parted. The enemy, all very near together, go on through the evolutionary curves which the British have described, and come following eastward.

They look now for a rush of the British upon the guarded ships, ready to follow. But no rush comes. The British keep on their way almost directly east.

A rush will come. But Hardy intends it to come when the Japs are in a position to intercept and cut him off. His thought, his patience, is far beyond their divination.

On he goes, leading them grandly through the mazes of that tragic, coiling minuet; and they follow, hasting gladly after him, triumphant, blind, fated.

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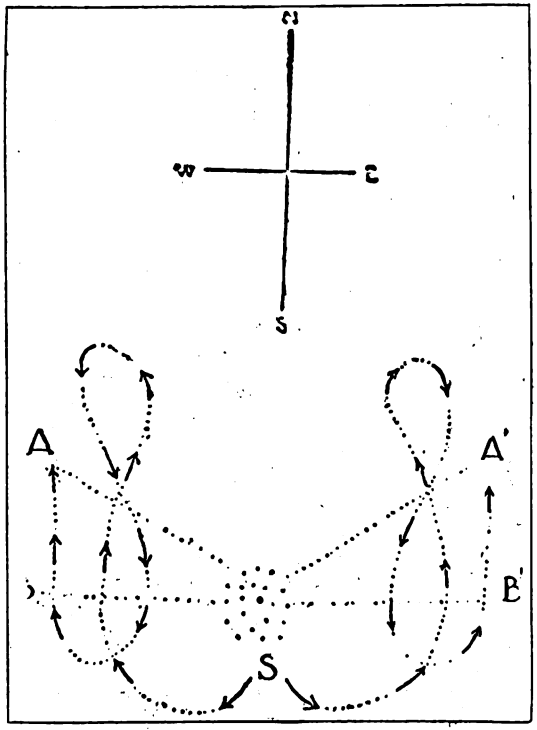
The Pied Piper and his retinue . . . !

His ships sink one by one. He is aware of it with guilty disquiet. Will enough be left for his purpose? The falling out of each one by the way-side is to him like the taste of the second death.

The Japanese follow, not gaining ground this time, purposely keeping their distance, even increasing it, waiting for the next curve to westward, and the disastrous swift broadside.

And round again goes Hardy, wheeling outward, this time in a broader curve; and outward wheels his northern limb.



[The arrows in the diagram will show the course which Hardy took, S being the region of his start, and the dots in the central part representing the twenty ships round Yen How.]

And once again clatters the sudden, exclamatory outrage of fire, bursting from both sides, and Hardy comes out of it leaving behind him four, and the Japanese seven ships.

But the numerical strength of Hardy's remaining ships by no means represents his real strength. He is far weaker than he seems. Twenty-two floating craft are still visible to his eye, but craft so broken and undone, that he knows them incapable of further serious combat. Nearly ninety Japanese are as good for fight as ever.

Once more he is running westward, and the enemy, conscious now of victory, follow.

Westward—till his two foremost ships reach the positions marked A and A' in the diagram: and then hard to starboard goes his helm. He goes driving sharp and straight with straining engines for the packed group of ships round the *Yoshino*.

This, then, is "the rush"! But the Japanese ships, their foremost being at the position marked B and B', are nearer to the *Yoshino* than the British—are in the exact position, in which Hardy, at the price of so much, has led them by the nose in long twining dance in order to place them.

What they will now do, he knows with certainty: they will cut him off. And, in fact, they turn sharply inward towards the precious, guarded ship, in order to intercept, and with one unanimous battery of their entire navy finish at once his small remainders.

And thus it has suddenly happened that the whole yellow fleet is packed into a mere bundle of ships whose crews can speak to each other, some of whose steersmen need be cautious to avoid collision.

And when Hardy sees them so,—herded together by his harsh and baleful forethought,—like sheep driven into the penfold,—he knows that the yellow wave is dammed, and the greatest of his works is accomplished.

He could shriek aloud with cruel glee.

Abroad roams his eye over the sea at his sinking and battered fleet. And as he looks, he sees the foundering of the *Nile*.

And swift, with concentrated fury, the massed Japanese open fire upon his feeble residue.

At that moment the two limbs of the British are not more than five hundred yards from the front of the enemy.

And at that moment it is that an appalling, horrid, unparalleled thing is happening to the Japanese.

Hardy has signalled to his ships to launch among the crowding enemy every possible torpedo in his fleet.

His prohibition to use torpedoes in the combat had led his captains to expect some such final order. They were well ready.

The torpedo was, of course, the most deadly of the then instruments of war. If it exploded beneath a ship, *without fail* it destroyed her. But precisely the most deadly was also, in general, the most unreliable, of weapons. In general it might be counted upon to explode not beneath an enemy's ship, but beneath a friend's, or, more likely still, beneath nothing at all. No serious tactician depended upon it.

In other words, it was not a good engine of aim at a given target, for it usually missed the target. Its course was more or less deflected by the waves—many things happened to it.

It was left to the eye of Hardy to perceive that its proper function was not one of aim at all toward a particular target, but one of loose direction toward a general mass. Under such conditions, it might be counted upon to annihilate in an instant all the assembled navies of the earth.

Prompt upon his order, the rest of his fleet, shattered as they were, were able to launch a ripping navy of nine more torpedoes than there were crowding Japanese and Chinese ships. The *Hirosaki* sent five: one from a bow-tube above the water-line, four submerged. All the other ships were ships with a varying number of tubes.

Three exploded in mutual collision before they reached the hostile fleet.

The rest arrived.

Men clapped and squeezed their hands upon their ears in expectant horror. The sea began to start, and rush, and quake. A swift series of venomous, behemoth bangs—*quickening into ever madder swiftness*—and rattling at last into a continuous thundering roar that seemed to proceed from the very throat of Jehovah—split the universal air, and burst the hearing of all about that sea.

It was heard in London; it was heard in Paris.

The British ships, shocked at each swift-recurrent detonation, jerked and started in convulsive throes, like dying fowl, upon the spasmic, kicking water—started, and leapt, and dived, and sank. And as though in response to some vast upheaval of nature, down upon the sea swept at once a passion of wind, and a furious rain, and a black and utter gloom.

Far over the ocean the floating millions of yellow men heard the staccato of that dread tumult. And many a one imitated and repeated the sound with his lips.

Pop, pop, pop, they went; and pop, pop, pop, they went,

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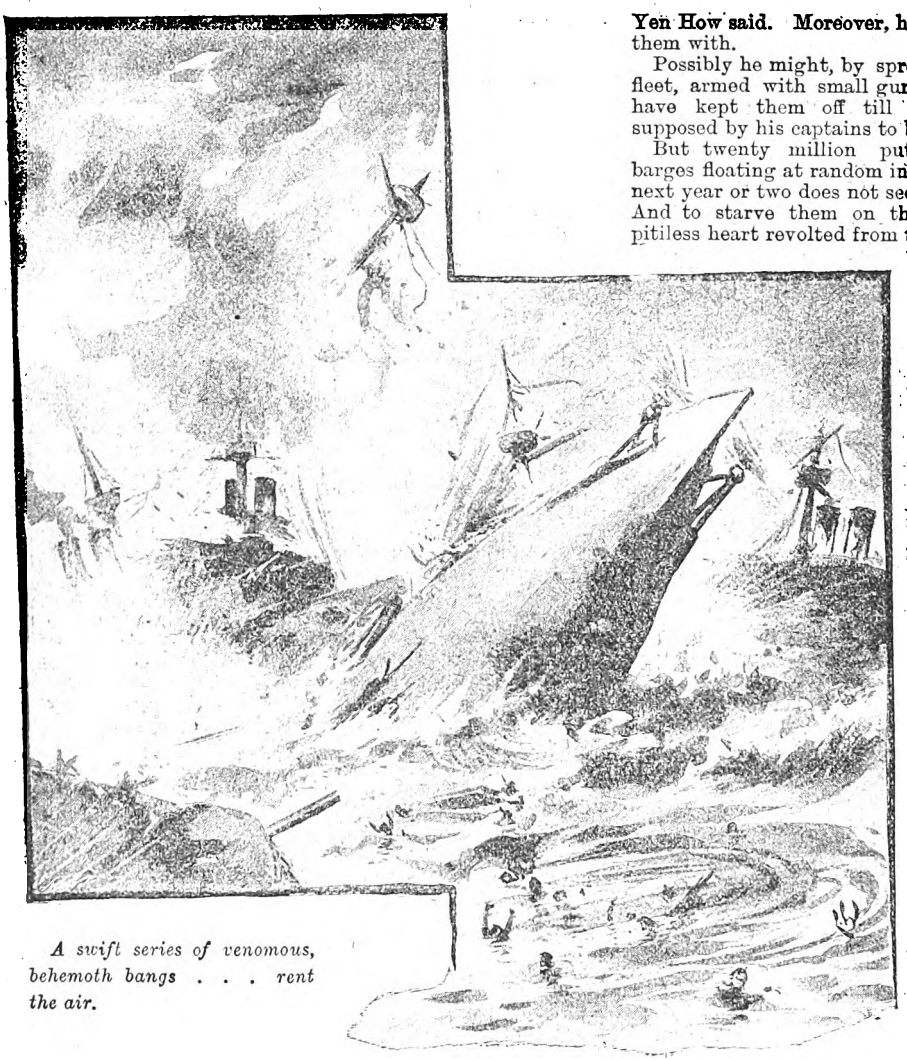

A swift series of venomous, behemoth bangs . . . rent the air.

Yen How said. Moreover, he had next to nothing to shoot them with.

Possibly he might, by spreading out his vast merchant fleet, armed with small guns, along the south-east coast, have kept them off till they starved; and this was supposed by his captains to be the course he would adopt.

But twenty million putrifying, derelict Chinese in barges floating at random in the Channel tide-way for the next year or two does not seem to have been after his mind. And to starve them on the open sea . . . even his pitiless heart revolted from that.

Or, they might have been driven back to France; or, seeing that they could not land on England, they might have returned to France on their own initiative. But Hardy did not wish them to return to France, thinking that there were already there a sufficient number of millions to engage the energies of his country for many a long day to come.

And so it happened that with the next morning's light—for at last something resembling a sun was seen, in spite of a furious gale of wind now blowing from the north-west—a strange, new spectacle, somewhere rather south of the latitude of Harwich, was seen—an immense multitude of ships covering the entire circle of sea, crawling painfully northward, each one trailing behind her a long line of barges crowded with men.

Hardy had the twenty millions in tow.

Not one had landed. To this diversion from their purpose, they had made practically no resistance. If a Chinaman fired at the tug which came to secure his barge, the barge was promptly sunk by way of stern example. Most were unarmed with fire-arms.

For many hours during the afternoon and night of the battle they toiled by the aid of search-lights, the ships having rendezvous at the N. Foreland, where, at about midnight, they congregated.

And now began the long, toilsome voyage northward.

What made the sufferings of both whites and Chinese worse, was the fact that, from the first bleak sunrise to the last, a heavy wet sea was running in the direction of the gale, and the burdened and labouring ships continually drenched their length in spray shipped over the dipping bows. A monotonous, light rain fell from the dark-grey and hurrying sky; and far over the heaving, stale sea-water rolled down stretches of foaming sea-spue, as though the sea, sea-sick of itself, spumed the vomit of its bitter old unrest adown its own weary bosom. Through the cordage sang in many tones the gale; and salt was in the weird sagas that it sang, and salt was on the flowing decks, and salt in the wet sea, and the world was made of brine.

Ever and again, a ship staggered through every timber, and stopped, tugged from behind by a backward swing of her ponderous following. Then on, crawling, again.

Here the tail led the dog.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The "Crime" of Hardy.

It is not our business here to defend what has been called by leisured persons sitting secure in their studies the "crime" of Hardy.

Napoleon, taking the "Laws of Heaven" into his own hands, poisoned at Acre a goodly number of his sick soldiers to save them from the hands of a cruel enemy. This, too, raised a cry, and was called "crime."

Another of that *genus* took upon Himself to break the old Sabbath, and this raised a cry; but He did not mind.

Personally, we believe that the Great Man has, naturally and properly, these powers; that what He does is right; that the King can do no wrong.

Having cleared the sea of hostile warships in that world-tragedy in the Channel, Hardy found himself confronted with the problem of an army which was approaching a long line of English coast—not far off—an army which was not so much an army as a locust host.

What was he to do with them?

He could not set about and shoot them, for that, supposing he had had a large fleet, would have taken him a year, as

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Ever and again, pop would go a stout hawser, and away would go drifting to the S.E. the lessening scream of a bargeload of Chinamen.

Northward, northward, in vast funereal procession. And far yonder in the van of all—the *Hirosaki*, shattered-looking, butting bulkily at the billows, as one who has seen worse things—and come through them. In her cabin, which is crowded with wounded men, sits Hardy; and near him, in long colloquy, a man named Henrick Björnson, a Norwegian sea-captain, who can shout broken English. What Hardy's deaf ears cannot make out, the man writes.

Northward crawls the unspeakable procession. It crosses the latitude of Hull, of Edinburgh; it approaches the Norway coast; it is at Bergen, at Christiansund. Always it crawls northward, and the *Hirosaki*, like the Pied Piper, leads. . . .

On the Tuesday foreday, the *Hirosaki*, in latitude 67° 48", slackened speed, and, while the dawning was still grey and ineffably bleak, the stragglers of the fleet came in.

Hardy had reached the grave-side now—the side of the one grave which Europe offered him for the burial of his dead.

Here and now a very great stress and sound of stormy winds were abroad, struggling for the held-on hat, blowing long ribbons of rope, and rolling before it billows of the sea.

The *Hirosaki* trumpeted a semi-circular formation, and this for about an hour, from ship to ship, went trumpeted till it reached the outermost rings of ships ten miles away. And in another hour and a half the vastest curve of ships, stretching north-east and south-west, that had ever been seen by an eye—the horns looking like tiny toys to the centre, and invisible to each other—lay assembled, slowly steaming, or sailing close-hauled.

The morning lightened, but with ever a slow, and drear, and raw melancholy. It was the morning of an execution.

John Hardy, with the brim of an oil-skin hat about his ears, in oil-skins to his feet, stood clinging to a taffrail aft, facing the strong blast that loaded his breast with spasms of violence, and struggled for the ends of his flapping and quarrelling skirts. And near him, in oil-skins, stood a tall, broad-bearded man, the sea-captain Björnson.

Björnson touched him.

Hardy said:

"Well?"

Björnson took out his watch, held it before Hardy's eyes, put his mouth to Hardy's ears, and shouted:

"*It is time!*"

Hardy said:

"All right."

Already in the look of the water around, there was something horribly *outré*. It seemed as if the sea were getting calm—too calm for the wind that blew. It acquired a certain pallid oiliness in its heave.

Hardy called his trumpeter; he said:

"Tell the captain of the *Umbria* that I want a hundred and fifty Chinamen taken on board his ship—at once."

And down the wind went this command to the neighbouring ship.

And in ten minutes this other:

"Ships to cast off barges, and follow flag-ship in same formation, west by south."

At once the *Hirosaki* put her bow in this direction. The other ships, as their hawsers astern tightened on their new course, slipped them. A thousand hawsers slapped the sea.

The ships moved on. The barges remained.

But not stationary. They, too, moved—slowly—glidingly—right in the teeth of the wind—northward—all of them, over many a mile.

The barges fell into long strings, and patches, and colonies, like trailing sea-weed, always, as they glided, retaining their fixed relative positions.

The men in the barges saw surely that they moved. But what moved them? The crude early-morning blast blew upon their woeful, sallow faces.

Their rate of motion, from moment to moment, quickened. . .

There was something now detestably baleful in the aspect of the water. The great waves had died to a glassy, heaving smoothness. Only, here and there in irregular patches over the surface broke out stretches of vapid foam, or ghastly bubbles. And the ocean went gadding, gadding northward.

This is the First Mood of the Maelstrom.

Then a wonder happened. A string of barges shot suddenly askew, and went wildly hasting in a long curve to the east; and another string shot askew in a western

"It is time!"

curve; and in not more than a minute a hundred thousand barges were spasmodically ranging in curves of every shape and direction over the sea, flying a while—then slowly stopping—then flying off in new curves again.

Suddenly, all this motion ceased. The sea settled into a lake-like stillness, except for patches of bursting, simmering bubbles on its face.

But with the suddenness of the thunder-clap came a change. The surface rapidly assumed a morose hue of the deepest blue, a blue which was liker black. And at once it began to heave itself up into waves, mountain-high, which danced like the Merrymen in a swinging, oscillatory, up-and-down jig, as if buoyed up by some great submarine power which dandled, and tossed, and danced them. And down the steep sides of these cones of water poured the barges of the clinging, staring, screaming men.

But now again, suddenly, the mood is changed—and a voice goes forth over the waters, a doleful sound of the sea. The high, dancing waves die down, and immediately an awful wide change is taking place—a rapid, intense reorganisation of the whole sea-surface—a breathless hurry and scurry of preparation for some unspeakable drama of the deep. There are tracts of black and choppy sea tumbling in roaring haste one way, and tracts tumbling another, as if flying across to take sides in some impending agony. And all at once the whole is over; and every wave,

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and eddy, and barge, and flake of froth, slips into the sweep of one mighty, bawling, racing whirlpool.

Within the writhing uppermost ridge of this vast circumference, invisible under a fierce white wrath of shrieking spray, fly with a thousand wings the barges of the yellow men, fly on even keel, fly uplifted, half in air, spurned from the polished ebony of the dizzy hollow-cone of water. And as they fly, the storm smothers their gasping breaths, and lifts their hair. And as their speed intensifies to the droning sleep of the spinning-top, their queues stiffen and rise horizontal like darting serpents; and twenty million straight and fluttering pig-tails, keeping ever their distances, race in narrowing whorls towards a bottomless, staggering well, that yawns, six furlongs broad, within the central space.

Six miles away, his glasses at his eyes, stands John Hardy, musing. . . . .

* * * * *

Opposite Christiansund, the *Hirosaki* and the *Umbria* were very near together; and here a change of crew took place; the entire crew of the *Umbria* transhipping into the *Hirosaki*, and one hundred and thirty of the *Hirosaki's* crew going over into the *Umbria*.

These hundred and thirty consisted exclusively of the "Hundred-and-Eighty" men of Kiao-chau fame.

It was a mysterious proceeding, incomprehensible to *Umbria* men, but readily comprehensible to some of the "Hundred and Eighty." These had sworn an oath.

On board the *Umbria* were a hundred and fifty Chinese.

Murray (he of the Diary) took over with him to the *Umbria* a small packet which he had received from Hardy's hand—which Hardy, in his turn, had received from a Dr. Fletcher of Harley Street.

The packet contained some hypodermic syringes, and three vials, containing a thick, dark-grey liquid. . . . .

The *Hirosaki* then continued on her southward way; but the *Umbria* put in at Christiansund.

There, on the strand near the town, shortly before morning, they landed two of the hundred and fifty Chinamen. In the right fore-arm of each of these two men was a tiny needle-prick; and as they went walking toward the town, an ink-black spot appeared on their cheek, and a black froth ridged their lips. . .

The *Umbria* then continued her voyage, which lasted two weeks. She stopped at Copenhagen, at Königsberg, at Stockholm, at Petersburg. And wherever she stopped, she landed two Chinamen with black spots on their cheeks, and a black froth at their lips. . .

She continued her voyage. She stopped at Amsterdam, at Boulogne, at Bordeaux, at Genoa, at Constantinople, at Odessa, at seventy-five European ports. At each she left two Chinamen with needle-pricks in their fore-arms. . . .

* * * * *

"Well, well, Brassey," said Hardy in the *Hirosaki* cabin, his arm flung spasmodically round the neck of Brassey, who had remained with him, "well, well, boy. I was once—I was once—different to this——"

His arm dropped heavily. Then, suddenly, he pushed Brassey violently on the breast.

"Go away—go away, sir," he cried.

And in an instant his arm dropped heavily again, his chin on his breast.

He was no longer sane. His hand was thicker than itself in brother's blood. His final hour of darkness and tragedy was hasting to meet his life. All his sky was an ink of clouds. Now again he tarried cowering in Gethsemane.

He no longer slept. Now he roamed the cabin like a wild man; now he sat still and languid, his head on his hands, his eyes having in them the senility of old people's. Every five minutes he bent double in paroxysms of moist coughing. Always the sailor, Brassey, was by him.

The *Hirosaki* arrived at Dover on the Friday evening at seven. A red brand of fever was then on Hardy's brow.

He was taken through the crowd in a close carriage to the Lord Warden Hotel. The news was flashed abroad that he had arrived, and all the bells of England gladly lilted and welcomed his coming. Hardy could not hear them.

For him was neither joy nor sleep. Doctors were summoned, but Hardy would not see them.

He threw himself on a bed; but rose again and paced the chamber in shirt, and trousers, and socks, to a late hour.

At eleven there was a ring. Brassey, who was in an anteroom, received a card at the door from a servant, but said that there was to be no admittance of any sort that night.

Hardy appeared suddenly at the inner door of the anteroom; he said:

"What is it?"

Brassey handed him the card, and Hardy looked at it.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed at once. "My friend Edrapol! Ha! ha! ha! Edrapol, my old friend!"

He had wholly forgotten Edrapol.

* * * * *

Behind the ruins of St. Mary's Church, north-east of the town, at two in the morning—they fought.

Here the strong, prone will of Hardy had asserted itself. He had insisted, and could not be withstood by Brassey. Edrapol's second was a sailor-boy from the *Hirosaki*, Hardy's was Brassey; and the weapons used were *Hirosaki* swords of Japanese design.

A full moon shone. Yonder on the foot-path leading from the East Cliffs waits a carriage, which has been coach-manned by Brassey.

It is a barbarous duel. There is no doctor there. Positively only four men are in the secret.

They take places, sword in hand, stripped to their shirts. The seconds take their places, too. There are two *Admiral Colomb* ship-lanterns.

This is a duel without venom on either side. In one mind there is the mere prone desperation of an hour of tragic gloom; in the other a mere coxcombish pleasure at finding once more a sword in his hand, and an antagonist before him.

Only two hearts throb as though they must burst the imprisoning bosom—the hearts of the seconds. The hearts of the principals are cool, though Hardy's body burns with fever.

The moment comes. Hardy coughs; Edrapol waits. Then the swords lift and cross.

And now ensues a three-minutes' contest between the most exquisite conceivable science on the one side, and the shrewdest, quickest wit on the other.

Briskly ply the complex, gleaming steels, with feint and thrust and parry, in tierce and quarte and staccato, stab and hew—to the infinite surprise of Edrapol, who finds here a man that can fight, and is glad.

He braces himself to the matter, Edrapol. He rises *à la hauteur* of his antagonist. But rise as he may, the fame of great Edrapol is henceforth stained, and his sleeve, —with a thin trickle of blood.

He flushes somewhat, Edrapol. It is necessary, then, to *couper court?* He rises to a still greater height. Among the long white hairs of the famous man plays the night-wind.

Then there is the sudden "Ah——," and the limp failure, and the strong contrast of red on white, and the sword clattering to the ground. The steel of Edrapol is in Hardy's bosom.

* * * * *

The next morning Britain learnt with woe and terror that he was wounded. He lay at the Lord Warden Hotel, and was unconscious, but, as to the wound, it was not dangerous. So ran the bulletins.

But by the next night, he was tossing in acute hyperpyrexia, and was delirious. Miss Bosey Jay had hurried to his side in almost crazy scare, and about his apartment waited two royal ladies. In one of the ante-rooms of the suite sat old Mason, stricken to death, swaying his decrepit body from side to side.

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Half-hourly bulletins were issued by the royal physicians.

At one time during the first night, Hardy seems to have gone back in imagination to the period of his tortures, uttering fearful screams, and exhibiting signs of the most abject terror. But towards morning, he became calmer under the influence of opiates.

About noon, Miss Jay's hand being then firmly gripped in his, he said quite coolly:

"A good strong coffin made of Harveyed nickel steel, dropped into the middle of the Channel. . . ."

And there stopped. Nor spoke again till some three hours afterwards, when, lifting up his right arm, he cried in a loud voice:

"By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How!"

After this the delirium appeared to leave him. He sank into a quiet sleep which, however, was made ominous by a throat rattle, and the veinous transparency of his far-sunken eye-lids.

The nation waited on in a bitterness of suspense, humbling itself before the Almighty in anguished prayer for his life, *but* for his life.

But at seven in the evening the end came. Hardy suddenly woke from his feeble slumber, jerked his body upright on the bed, and as it in answer to some official summons, screamed a sharp "*Here!*" and gasped, and died.

His Calvary was not heroic—without "vigour and rigour."

That the great man of England should perish by the hand of an impossible, very-foreign professional duellist, here was the very irony of Destiny. But so it was.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Black Spot.

With the death of Hardy the detail of our chronicle must end.

The results of his malignest act of enmity against the yellow race—results far surpassing in horror and vastness those of any of his other acts—he did not live to witness.

It is certain that he could never have expected so wide-spread a result from the distribution of the injected Chinamen about the European coasts, for the simple reason that he did not know of Yen How's inauguration of the Yellow Gods at Paris, which inauguration was the chief cause of the universality on the Continent of the new Black Death.

As soon as an idol-less Chinaman was griped by the malady, or even saw the black spot on a neighbour's cheek, his first instinct was to rush toward the one place of hope—the temple at Paris. And as he rushed, he went spreading far and wide that winged plague, that more putrid Cholera, dissipating it among thousands, who in their turn rushed to infect wide millions.

So within three weeks perished, it is said, a hundred and fifty millions. Europe was a rotting charnel-house.

The steel of Edrapol is in Hardy's bosom.

But in three months the plague was over; and still England found herself confronted with the long, and sometimes bloody, and always tedious, task of clearing out of Europe nearly a hundred million yellow men.

After all, John Hardy's idea of the extinction of the yellow man never came to pass. Hardy was wise, but Nature is wiser. The yellow man is in the *Scheme*.

But now this one appalling fact arose upon the consciousness of the British people: that the Continent of Europe was British territory. This meant that all Asia and Africa were British, too. And if Europe, Asia, and Africa, then, beyond doubt, America also; for no two Powers, one so vast and the other so comparatively small, could co-exist side by side without a formal or informal acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the greater by the smaller. The sceptre of Britain, therefore, stretched from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

How now would she comport herself, old England? Would her reign be mild, and golden, and millenial? Or harsh, and vulgar, and *triste*?

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Here now was the chance for the rather minor poets of the time to break into measured prophecy, and with a certain real authority, sing for the nation its august present, and define its future. And Mr. William Watson—the man-lyre—say Apollo's lyre, without Apollo—he sang:

Now declare me, my love, my dove,
The Temple you fore-see;
Its frame below, its dome above,
And the Fabric's Summary.

So the lover sitting at the feet of his inspired mistress; and the mistress:

And would you foreknow the seeming
Of the Frame they now shall found?
Like a palace of pearl in mid-air!
And rainbows embosom it round.

Like lambs that bedow the hillside,
Or the flocks of dew at morn:
So natural, various, virgin.
Like a King's Heir, tardy-born.

Like anything mild and pompous,
Like anything based and broad:
Like the ascent with which King Solomon
Went up to the House of the Lord.

Like the minuet's sphere-harmony,
So cultured, measured, gay;
Like the Voice of God in the Garden
When it walked in the Cool of the Day.

It is the Ergon of all the Ages,
And kin to all Works of Art;
It shall stand in the All-Museum
As Man's contributed part.

For Mr. John Davidson, on the other hand (risky Pegasus-rider, he, or say even Pegasus-Jockey, not unacquainted with falls), the throng and noise of martial things had charms, and out, at the spur of the war, he broke:

Already War's barytone
Breaks up the camp of them,
Weigh well the ramp of them,
Marching to Marathon,
World-quake the tramp of them!

And he insists:

Wide, wide is the song of it,
Battle-words, doubtings,
Allalahs, routings,
Mix in the throng of it,
Jericho shoutings. . . .

. . . . .

But Ares, our man of war,
Flames o'er us unequal,
Not doubtful the sequel,
E'en now from the van of war
Rave rumours of triumph. . . .

But in the matter of prophecy, it was the poet, Mr. Francis Thompson—Miltonic, he, if not Milton, seeming sometimes to possess that rarest of all human faculties, the power of expressing an idea (or "thing-seen-by-the-mind") in fated words suggesting magic—he, in a single line, struck the chief motive of the future. For he says, slightly before the war:

I had in dreams an omen of the Year,
And many shapes foresaw, and divers woes;
In earth and sky was storm—till one clear sphere,
Calm as the moon, arose.

I saw processions; runnings to and fro;
One gasped his news, and died, arrived from far;
I heard disjointed trampings come and go,
And trumpets blown for war.

"The people have forgotten God," I said:
Frowns so superb, then war so huge, they showed:
The rocking nations, brazen-throated, dread,
Like Bulls of Bashan lowed.

. . . .

A sunset in the East, malign and drear;
Eclipses boding Change, and divers woes:
In earth and sky was night—till one clear sphere,
Calm as the moon, arose.

And one I saw who steered a boat of air,
A thing with helm complete, and valve, and sail:
He called: "To bring man nearer man I fare:
The gods up here—are well."

This prophesy of the *boat of air* was quite worthy of a seer: for that—successful aerial navigation—was, as it turned out, the big thing, the paramount *motif*, of the new century, utterly changing the relations of man with man, and, in fact, making Man a new creature.

When the journey from London to Pekin became a matter of a few hours, and a thing easy to each man, then Man, and each man, might be said, for the first time, to possess the earth.

The immediate result was the establishment, once and for all, of that sole basis of real national culture and of real individual refinement—Equality!

Upon the practical annihilation of one sort of space followed the annihilation of other sorts of space—of the space, for example, between you and me.

Equality! Victoria does not despise the Prince of Monaco. Both are independent sovereigns. The little prince does not kneel before the great queen: they are independent sovereigns. When all men were independent sovereigns, then came Culture, and the golden time.

A democracy of kings . . . . . or, at least, of gentlemen. . . .

The name of this democracy was—English?

The words France, Germany, Russia, persisted,—but only for postal convenience?

* * * * *

No, certainly, that would never do. England, no doubt *will*, in truth, absorb the world. The Loadstone is within us. But we must change. If the world is to become English, the English must first become worldly. We will not do as we are—we are in shockingly bad form!

Yet, here is a question: how came that epithet "*merry*" to be applied to our Vulgar-Roman England? *How came it?*

Is it not for this very reason—that all Man is embryo within us? Man the engineer, Man the conqueror, Man the ruler, Man the Puritan, Man the Greek?

The Greek phase, certainly, is in a state of embryonism "highly elementary"! Our Oxford professors do not crown their heads with vine-leaves—yet. The vine is not, in fact, an English plant. Yet lo! one hears already that it is being grown with success in Wales.

Wales—note the locality. Great England! In her is everything. In her is also—*the Celt*.

This is what John Hardy meant, when, writing from Paris, he said that all which they had there we should have, too, in time—and much more, much more. And Hardy was a lad likely to know.

England, indeed, is as old as France. But not so "precocious." Just as the French ladies *fade* sooner than the English, so France has become a modish old dowager, while England is yet a bouncing, crude, coarse-handed lass in her teens.

The centuries are not ended; the years of Destiny will unfold themselves.

On the whole, we here, looking up through the Night at the general drift of the stars, read for the earth a good Horoscope. We bet on Man. He is a right clever fellow—well-meaning—well-made. We lay our money on *him*—to our last copec, to our final obol, to our uttermost farthing—we bet it all on him!

His past is good—it is even brilliant. And somewhere within it there is a Secret, which at certain swift moments of insight, shocks, and dazzles, and electrifies the soul.

We, then, for our part, believe, and cry aloud, and prophesy. Out of the Eater shall come forth Meat, and out of the Strong shall come forth Sweetness.

"*The gods up here . . . . !*"

THE END.

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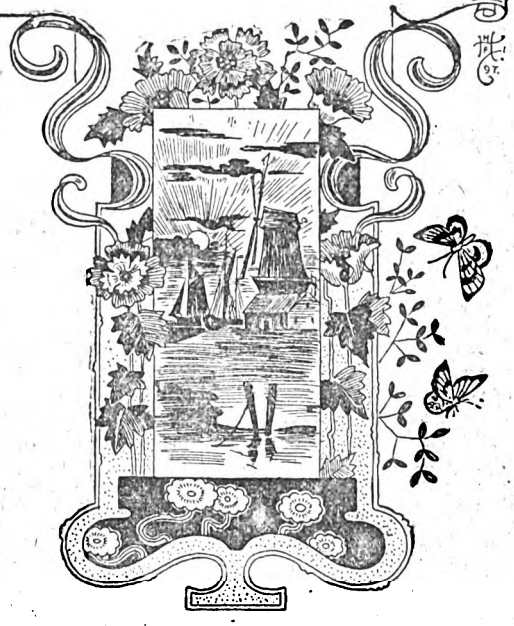
A SAINT FROM THE SEA.



THERE is a village on the Carribean Sea where the thatch huts and the palms seemed tilted away from the everlasting southwest wind. It straggles backwards over the loose sand from the sweeping beachline that is lost in either direction in hanging mists from the breakers.

A low sand-bar, held out by the river, affords a shelter in fine weather for the canoes; when it storms, the breakers wipe it out and roll back on the beach. On squally nights the sand swirls up the one street, and the whistling of the lashed trees is louder than the roar of the sea behind the houses.

On fine days the fleet of canoes comes sailing home at sunset, and the fish the women pile on the sand are many-coloured. When the weather is heavy from the north and the canoes are out there is anxiety as the black boats come racing home over the dark water, and in the house of Juan prayers are said incessantly.

There is ready help on the beach for those who come through the breakers, and the beacon fires are whipped and beaten down by the wind, giving weird flashes of light. Many a woman has paced the coast through the night in sorrow, waiting for dawn to show the brown body of a fisherman beached among the cold fish.

Nets and lines are stretched to dry in the warm sand between the houses and the line of canoes on the beach. Empty salt barrels litter the village, and drying-frames for the fish are built even to the edge of the forest.

One calm morning the canoes from this village were some ten miles out at sea. Fishing was slow, and the men lolled over the gunwales scarcely paying attention to their lines. Juan Renjifo's canoe had drifted out beyond the others, when Juan's sharp eyes saw wreckage floating on the water.

"There may be tackle or iron work to be had, so we'll run over and see," said Juan.

They found the deck-house of a schooner. It had evidently floated for some weeks, for the soft green sea-grass clung flat to the exposed sides as the wreckage rose and fell on the waves. Juan's men made fast and gathered several lengths of slippery rope, and began prying off rusty hinges and iron rings.

"Hello, what's that?" called the boy who had clambered on to the wreckage.

He was peeping down the companion-way into the still water within the battered walls. He reached in and slowly drew to the opening an object that held the attention of the men crowding behind him. It was the schooner's cabin door, and on the upper side was tacked a large picture. The paper was damp and seaweed grew to the door's edges. As it was drawn out into the sunlight the colours of the picture shone brightly, and through the masses of soft seaweed the men saw the outlines of a fair face and figure.

Interest in the ironwork was forgotten; rough hands brushed the grass from the floating door, and then they clearly saw the picture of a beautiful girl in a flowing, pale blue dress, her arms hanging at her sides. Her brown hair was tossed over her shoulders and the shadow of it was in her eyes. The bottom of the picture was torn away.

"Lift it out carefully," ordered Juan, "and set it in the canoe that the sun may dry it. Look at her! Jesu Nazareno! is she not beautiful!"

The canoe headed for home on the afternoon breeze. The sun dried the picture, and the men wondered who the woman might be and at the strange way it had come to them. Juan, as the captain of the canoe, referred to the find as his own, so forestalling any discussion as to the picture's place ashore.

In the village that evening interest in the haul was forgotten as the women crowded round the painting on the sand. They are a simple fisher people and superstitious, as are all men who follow the sea. As Juan's companions recited the circumstances of their discovery and heard the credulous comments of the women, they invested their find with the mystery and outer significance that had been growing in the mind of each of them during the run home. When Juan and another picked up the door the crowd followed quietly behind. Juan stood it up inside his hut, and there, in the light of flickering lamps, the people came in to admire the graceful form and the eyes and the soft colours.

"It looks like the pictures of the saints in the church at Vallalolid," said one.

The house became popular in the village, and its visitors grew. They envied Juan the possession of the thing, and the man first felt a pride in owning an object

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so popular, then a certain inexplicable allegiance to the eyes that looked out from the shadows of the hair.

* * * * *

Since three in the afternoon Winslow's horse had followed the road that led through the low forest behind the beach. Occasionally he had glimpses of the sea and the murmur of the surf was always in his ears. These tropical lands had a fascination for the Britisher, who spent months wandering from village to village among these sad-eyed, indolent and mysterious people, speculating as to their origin, interested in their ways and minds, and in a vagabondage that satisfied his restlessness. In such a mood he drew near, in search of a bed, to the village on the sands. He unsaddled his horse before the priest's door and the tired animal turned with a contented sigh to his fodder.

Later in the evening, as Winslow walked through the village, he came to Juan's house. His attention was attracted to the picture through the window, and on Juan's invitation he walked in. He laughed as he recognised the familiar poster and recalled the hoardings where he had last seen it.

"How did you people ever get that down here?" asked Winslow.

"It came to us from the sea," said Juan, and he recited the finding.

Winslow listened and understood how the cook, maybe, of some trading schooner had tacked this bright thing to his cabin door; but he knew nothing of the strange, almost religious hold it had already gained in the hearts of these fishing people. He laughed again.

"It's a small world, after all; think of that girl stuck up down in this hut," Winslow spoke in Spanish, and turned away.

"Why—you—do you—know her?" gasped Juan.

"Know her? Why, yes; it's a picture of Marie—what would you call it in Spanish?—Tempest; yes, that's it, Maria de la Tempestad."

Then Winslow turned and walked away, and only the eyes of the picture saw Juan fall on his knees and raise his hands.

Maria de la Tempestad! It was all clear to him now. From the sea she had been sent to help and comfort them. Maria de la Tempestad!—the patron saint of sailors, sent to watch over and guide them, to hear their prayers, to brighten their lives with her sweet mercies.

That night the first candle burnt on the new altar.

Juan related what he had learnt from Winslow. It only confirmed the dim belief of many of the people, and his story was accepted with a fervent joy in their good fortune. The picture was raised high on the wall, and a table before it held the dripping candles. The village girls brought flowers each morning and hung them over the old schooner's door. That room in Juan's house was given over to the new saint, for women came often to pray. Her blessing was asked as the canoes started in the morning, and thanks were given for her bounty when the fish were piled on the beach at dark.

There soon came a night when a fierce wind blew the canoes homeward over the waters. Then the women prayed long to Mary of the Tempest, while the men worked on the beach. Pedro's canoe did not come in, and Pedro's Tulita, in company with Dolores, whose man, Alejandro, worked with Pedro, knelt before the shrine and prayed—prayed until Pedro and Alejandro staggered into the light of the fires, exhausted from a battle with the surf far down the beach. Then ex-voto offerings appeared on the little altar—trinkets sold by Italian pedlars, cheap, tawdry and pitiful—but th cherished possession of some simple girl—or maybe a long strand of straight black hair.

So Maria de la Tempestad was enshrined and the church was neglected. The priest argued in vain. Was she not their saint, sent to them from the same sea that had brought sorrows to them all? they answered. Had she not saved Tulita's Pedro and Dolores's Alejandro?

What she had done for them was sufficient for them: their faith could not be shaken. From the shrine where they had placed her, by the mystery of her coming, by the look of her tender eyes, she ruled them and filled their lives. Men and women from neighbouring villages came to see and envied, just as the villagers themselves had in the beginning envied Juan that which was now regarded as a common good.

* * * * *

A little steamer puffed evenly over the green waves towards this village. The captain had decided to run in here for water and to pass the night should the weather threaten. A striped awning was over the upper deck, and beneath it and in the little cabin reclined the passengers. Forest, the company's advance agent, had brought about this sea trip to vary the heated journeys of the International Variety Company, of London, now touring in America.

With his customary push and knowledge of the country, he had arranged this sea trip instead of the hard overland journey to La Vela, where they were to open Sunday night. That was Foster's way of putting it. The captain smiled as he listened.

The company had played to good houses since arriving, but travelling expenses were heavy, and at the last town some properties had been shipped by mistake to Brazil, and Schaefer, the proprietor, and his son were complaining of business. They were inclined to blame Forest for losing the properties, and the company saw signs of a payday with no pay.

Becker, the stage manager, maligned the country to the good-natured captain; the soubrette talked at the engine-room door with the red-faced English machinist who passed as engineer.

The Japs, on the bills as trapeze performers, sat contentedly and quietly at the stern. La Cigale discussed the recent robbery of her trunk and the £15 she had lost thereby. Thus the afternoon, cooled perceptibly by the sea breeze, wore on, and the steamer headed in for the clearing in the green coast line that marked the huts.

The change in the boat's course aroused the women to a curiosity as to whether they were to spend the night at sea. The steamer swung in behind the headland that gave the village its so-called port. Interest in the picturesque houses and the dark people grouped on the sand beyond the quick reaches of the crumbling waves drew the minds of the soubrette and the dancer from their unanswered questions. They were seeing for the first time some of the beauty of the shores, and it attracted them. The steamer dropped anchor, and the soubrette climbed noisily into the first canoe that approached.

"Take me ashore, you niggers; I want to see your town. You ought to wear more clothes. They'd look at you in Bond Street dressed like that. Come on, Cigale, I'll help you in; come on, Becker, you can stand us beer. Have you got any beer ashore? Cerveza? Cerveza? I must have it."

Becker and the others tumbled clumsily into the big

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dug-out, while the natives steadied the canoe in silence and marvelled at the strange behaviour.

The strangers jumped ashore the moment the wave ran out and started toward the village, bent on reading its novelty. The soubrette tripped in her loose wrapper and the sand filled her unbuttoned shoes. Her hair was dishevelled and of two colours, for the dye worked out slowly.

At the door of the first house stood a native woman clad in a clean, simple dress of the country. She smiled pleasantly as the girl came along, and the soubrette entered her house. Once inside, she ran inquisitively at each object that drew her attention; she laughed at the low chairs, chattered away in English and made fun of the scanty furniture and household comforts.

Meantime the Indian smiled pleasantly. Unbidden, the soubrette passed into a second room and stumbling over a sleeping child, upset a gourd of freshly washed corn.

Then the Indian woman's face set a little and the smile left it—and the soubrette thought of her beer.

"Cerveza? Cerveza?" she asked.

The woman misunderstood, and pointing toward the door, answered:

"Si."

Becker and the others were passing.

"Come on, Becker, they've got beer in here, and she's going to treat——"

But the woman's dark arm barred the way as the others approached, so the girl left the house and followed them up the street, stumbling over her dress in the sand. Smiling men and women stood in doorways as they passed, and gravely offered them seats when they entered. But the visits were short, and like a gust of disordering wind in the neat houses. Becker trailed in the rear, dragging his coat and pulling up his trousers.

As the two came back down the street, the faces in the doorways were dark and forbidding, and behind the older people crowded children, watching the strangers with round eyes. In front of the church Becker and the soubrette met the rest of the party.

"I say, this village will have to do," began the girl, "I'm going to stay here all night—I'm not going to sleep in that little steamer——"

"Ugh!" said La Cigale, "vere will you sleep? Ze peegs walk zemselves into ze rooms, and zere are no beds."

"That's all right, they sleep in hammocks; I'll sleep anywhere. I've got friends all over the town. Becker and I have visited every family here. We'll give a show to-night—there's about ten shillings in the town, I guess. Mr. Forest, you're slow, you ought to have billed this place three days ago, and——"

The bedraggled girl broke off upon catching sight of young Schaefer, approaching with a roll of paper under his arm.

"Hello, Paul, what have you got? My posters, I declare. Let me have one. Are we going to play this town?"

"I've only got one, and it's for the Custom-house man; the captain said to give him one, it would please him——"

"Let me have it, I want it," interrupted the girl; "you can get another. I'm going to bill the town—go on—let me have it; you know you bought the whole lot cheap from the dealer's; it's the first time I ever travelled under anyone else's poster, but these niggers don't know the difference."

She pulled the paper from under Schaefer's arm and ran back to the church wall. She clambered up on an empty barrel that stood there and unrolled the poster to the view of the whole street. She fastened its top between two palm boards. There was the fair figure in flowing pale blue dress, and the serene eyes that looked out from under the shadow of rippling brown hair. "*Esta noche á las ocho*" ("To-night at 8 o'clock") was printed across the bottom in black letters.

A crowd gathered quickly, but it was a sullen and silent one, and the soubrette went on:

"*Esta noche á las ocho*—come and see me—Cerveza? No, *para mi* champagne," and from the unsteady barrel she raised one foot coquettishly.

A tall Indian had gripped Becker by the shoulder and was talking earnestly; the crowd grew, with never a word spoken.

"What's he saying, Jim; you know his talk?"

"He says is that picture of you."

"Yes; tell him yes. *Yo, mi—si, si. Esta noche á las ocho,*"—and again the soubrette tried to kick from the barrel.

An excited murmur broke from the crowd, and women raised threatening hands.

"*Si, si*—that's me—*esta noche,*" but that was all. The barrel swayed and Becker caught the girl as she fell. They were quickly surrounded by the outraged villagers, and as the company hurried towards the canoe that had brought them ashore the natives surged round them.

Luckily there were no stones to hand, but they threw what they could. The girl, now in mortal terror, was pale and fainting. She put her arms over her head and stumbled blindly toward the beach. The women tore her clothes from her back. She fell into the canoe bleeding and bewildered. In disorder they pushed off, and Becker's clumsy efforts with the paddle half filled the boat in the breakers.

* * * * *

That night many candles burnt upon the altar in the house of Juan.

THE MARINER.

M. A. P.

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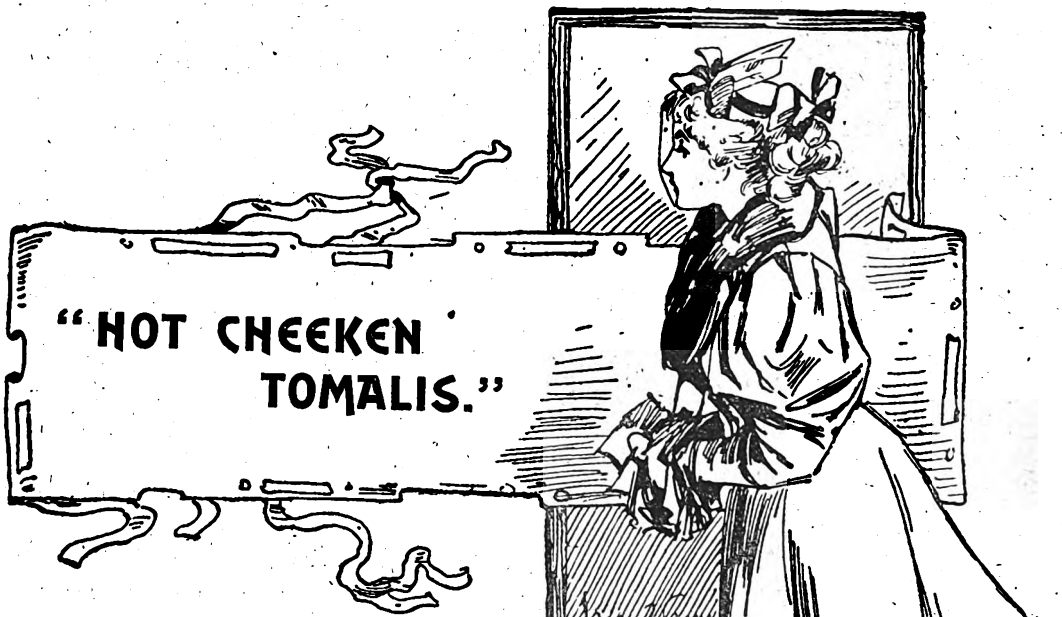

A BRILLIANT sunrise, a tomali stall, a handsome brunette tomali seller, and a savoury smell.

Those were the four things which Cyril Delzan noticed on the Plazadel San Antonio, Vera Cruz, one summer's morn.

Details at their best, perhaps, yet details which struck Cyril forcibly. The sunrise put him in a good temper, the tomali stall and its savoury ware put him in even a better, while the brunette—— But there! Cyril Delzan was impressionable.

He hesitated irresolutely in the middle of the almost deserted plaza. Should he, Cyril argued, return to the hotel for his breakfast, or stop and take a stay in the shape of a tomali? He sighed, stepped forward, stopped dead, then glanced lingeringly at the stall.

An arch smile, which displayed a brilliant row of small white teeth, coupled with the dimpled cheeks of the tomali maiden, decided Cyril. He retraced his steps, and advanced to the stall.

"*Buenos dias, señora, uno tomali, uno tomali.* Oh, blow! it's if you please, in English! Ingles, if you please!"

The Vera Cruzan maiden smiled again in reply to the lucid explanation and to the upraised sombrero.

Cyril glanced at the tomalis before him, then bending, sniffed suspiciously at the appetising odour, which issued from their tops.

"'Ot tomalis, señor, 'ot cheeken tomalis." More smiles and encouraging nods.

Cyril leant on the stall and commenced to eat.

"So you speak Ingles," he remarked between his mouthfuls. "Fine tongue—*bella lingua, Ingles! Bella*, than—than tomalis."

Another smile, very marked this time; evidently she understood him. "Very glad you and I can talk—hold a conversazione. Not a Dorcas meeting, is it? What is your name, *bella donna*? Deadly nightshade, eh? The everlasting Juanita, I suppose; eh, *bella persona?*"

Another arch smile. She had evidently comprehended the last two words of his speech.

He waited a moment for a reply. Receiving none, he took another bite out of his tomali, then pointing at her with his index finger said questioningly:

"Juanita?"

"*Ni! Ni!*" she replied brightly, catching the gist of what he meant. "Name? Angelinita!"

"Great Scott! Thanks, *gracias señora!*" he replied cheerily, emphasising his remark by dropping his pie, which rolled away merrily underneath the stall.

"Anozzer tomali?" she queried archly, holding one up in her taper fingers. "*Ozzer mato!*"

Cyril glanced at the pie which was being rapidly hidden from view in the mouth of a dog, then took the proffered eatable.

"You make them yourself?" he queried.

"Pedro."

"Sharp boy, Pedro! Well, adieu señora, *adios! buena ventura!* I don't know what it is, but that's all one. See you to-morrow," he cried, as, flinging the tomalis to the expectant dog, he paid the twelve centavos due for the tomalis and held out his hand.

Unhesitatingly she placed her slim one in his, which he impulsively raised to his lips. He gazed at it for a few seconds, marvelling at its beautiful shape, then glancing at the merry eyes before him, ever dancing with a latent mirth, he dropped the hand suddenly, and laughing merrily, started blithely on his way across the sunlit plaza.

Cyril Delzan was in love!

* * * * *

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Twenty-eight days had passed since Cyril had first met Angelinita, and eight-and-twenty times had Delzan met the tomalis girl.

"*Si*, señorita," he exclaimed, taking the usual tomali from her stall, at the customary hour, 7.30 a.m. "This is eight and twentieth tomali I have eaten. *Sabe, bella Angelinita*, why I regularly eat them?"

"You's hungry, p'raps, Cyril!" she remarked archly, her cheeks radiant with dimples.

"*Ni, ni*! It's to see you, *mia bella querida*!"

A rippling laugh answered this enamoured declaration. Cyril felt small.

"Angelinita!" he exclaimed seriously, leaning his elbows on the stall. "I have taught you English, to make you able to understand how I love you. *Carisima*, you understand what I say?"

The pretty dark-eyed maiden was listening very intently, she dropped her long lashes modestly, glanced coyly at him from under them, then folding her hands together, waited.

"Hot chicken tomalis are very good," Cyril remarked with judicial gravity, "yet they may ultimately pall on the palate! Now, you see, *mia querida*, you could never do that. I have lots of reals, I am not a hopeless idiot, so don't you think you might take me in hand for the rest of your life, eh?"

"You would ver troublesome be," she remarked, pouting charmingly.

"No, I shouldn't be particularly obnoxious, I assure you," he replied genially. "I should be awfully good. I say, you have forgotten the pepper in these tomalis this morning. Angelinita, will you be my wife? And become an Inglesa señora? 'Pon honour, I have thousands of reals a year, I love you desperately, and all that sort of thing. You can have everything you wish for, and ——"

"Cyril, I do not vant your reals!" she interrupted tearfully.

"That means you won't have me, I suppose," he muttered gloomily. "Well, all right, it's vilely rough on me. I thought you might have loved me for my cash, then I could have had you always beside me! Well! well!" he exclaimed desperately. "I never had any luck, so why should I expect it now—— ?"

"Cyril!" she whispered gently, leaning over the stall till her soft cheek brushed against his, "I loff you vor you, *carisima*!"

"Angelinita!"

"Cyril!"

"*Mia carisima!*" murmured Cyril, stealing a hurried kiss, as he slipped over her taper finger a ring of brilliants. "Keep that till I replace it by a simpler one! But one which to me will be far more valuable."

The Vera Cruzan's English was limited as before stated, yet by stringing together the words she understood, she managed to get the gist of what he said. Twenty-eight days' tuition and cuteness had wonderfully improved her knowledge of the tricky language of Albion.

"Oh, it is lofely!" she murmured softly, gazing wonderingly at the ring flashing its prismatic rays angrily round. "Jus' lofely!"

"Not one bit as lofely as you, *carisima*."

"Bah! y'say zat cause 'oo love me, Cyril," she replied, blushing, as, taking off the ring, she placed it in her bosom. "*Adios*, Cyril—here, come, man, eat tomali. *Adios*, till morrow." She blew a kiss airily to him.

"*Adios*, then," he cried gaily. "Hang the man who wants to eat tomalis!"

"Tomali no sell then!" she replied archly, waving her hand to him.

He laughed gaily, then turned to walk to his hotel.

On his arrival there he found two letters awaiting him; one from his solicitors, the other from his step-mother, Lady Delzan. The letter from the former was cold and formal, and ran as follows:

SIR,

Richard Wingate, Earl of Rosolyn, being deceased, and leaving no heir, you, we believe, have inherited the title and estate belonging to the same. We respectfully urge an immediate return to England.

Yours obediently,
KNOX, BACON & BACON.

His step-mother's was equally as cold:

DEAR CYRIL,—I think it about time you returned to Delzan Towers. Loitering in Vera Cruz will not improve you, so kindly return to 40 Park Lane, at the beginning of the season. Of course you have not forgotten Queenie Somerset or my wishes on the subject—wishes, I may add, it will be unwise on your part to thwart.

Sincerely yours,
CHARLOTTE, LADY DELZAN.

"Charlotte, Lady Delzan," he muttered mechanically, applying a lighted vesta to the corner of the letter. "'Wishes it will be unwise on your part to thwart!' By Jove, if I do, I am penniless! What induced my pater to put that infernal clause in his will is beyond my ken. Queenie Somerset—estimable, no doubt—yet unappropriate! Great Scott! What am I to do about Angelinita? Lady Delzan's back will be up when she knows that the maiden of my choice is only a tomali girl!"

It was six in the evening before he came to a resolution as to what he would do. Seating himself at the table he penned a short note to Angelinita, then taking out his cheque-book he wrote a cheque.

"It's a caddish thing to do," he muttered hoarsely, "yet what can I do? Stay! I'd better not the cheque, I'll put in notes."

The mistake was soon remedied, and he rang a hand bell.

"Carloo!" Cyril exclaimed as a boy answered his summons, "take this to that address, and send the padrone here. I wish to pay my bill."

Carloo bowed and made his exit to give the order preparatory to taking Cyril's letter.

Angelinita received the note an hour later, and opening it in the fast fading light, read the following with rapidly blanching features:

CARO MIO,—By the time you have received this, I shall have left Vera Cruz and all it holds dear behind me. I have just received a letter from my *madre*, who desires me to marry my cousin. A refusal means ruin. Angel, forget and forgive me! I shall never forget you—I never shall, as Heaven is my witness! I dare ask the same of you? Inclosed you

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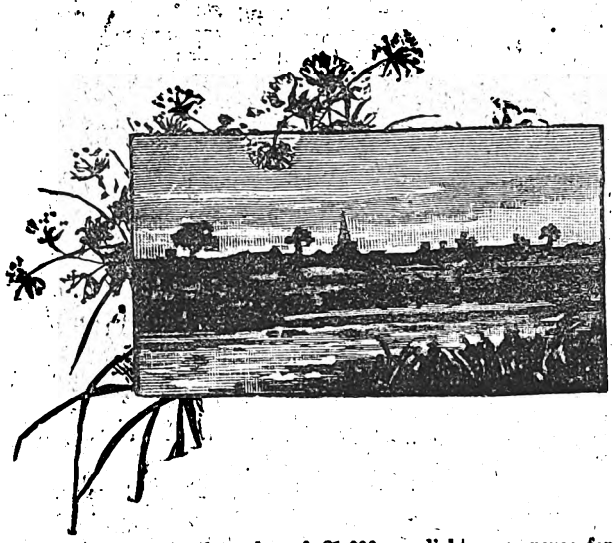

will find notes to the value of £1,000—a slight recompense for those twenty-eight days of bliss I have spent with you; days, alas, which have wrecked my future life, as they have blighted my happiness! Angel, *adios* for ever! It is useless for you to search for me, but if at any time you are in monetary distress go to Senor Nozes.

Yours in memory till death,

Cyril Delzan.

The letter fluttered unheeded to the ground, the notes lying crushed in her nerveless hands, which were pressed in agony against her heaving bosom.

"Cyreel! Cyreel!" she muttered hoarsely. "Did oo tink reals could make me forget? Though I *am* but a tomali girl!"

Then sinking on a stool, she buried her face in her hands, while dry, heavy sobs shook her slender frame.

Two hours later Pedro looked in the room. The pale moonlight shed its soft effulgence over all.

"Angel!" he cried. "Art here, *Caro*," then elevating his voice exclaimed, "*Carisima*, thy brother has come home."

Receiving no answer he entered the room, then uttered a cry, as he noticed the senseless figure of his sister stretched before him, one hand clutching a crumpled note, the other a ruby ring.

* * * * *

Lady Delzan was pleased with herself, decidedly so, for had not Cyril just returned with his wife from a honeymoon, which had lasted eighteen months?

"My dear Cyril," she exclaimed rapturously, the evening following his return, "Queenie looks positively charming to-night!"

"'Umph!" was the sociable rejoinder. "Glad you think so!"

"And she is so vivacious and pretty that she has captured the hearts of all the old bachelors."

"That's always her first exploit when she's at a dance. I wish one would capture her and execute a bolt."

"Cyril!"

"My dear mater-in-law—or, rather, step-mater—please don't look so horrified. You worry me." He smelt his carnation buttonhole.

"Cyril, did I hear you correctly?"

"Couldn't say I'm sure. I remarked that I wished some old Johnnie would execute a bolt with her!" Cyril said callously.

"You are decidedly flippant," remarked Lady Delzan stiffly. "Come to the ballroom, Cyril, the clock is just on the stroke of twelve—it is time for supper! Ah, the lancers just ended; how opportune. You will take the Marchioness of Russleton in. I reserved the supper for you with her."

"Awfully kind of you, but I wish you hadn't."

"Cyril, she's charming! Blonde and sweetly pretty——"

"I hate blonde dolls!" interrupted Cyril irritably. "My wife's blonde."

Lady Delzan ignored his last words; it was politic so to do, for she had no wish to rehearse the stormy scenes he had with her during the days preceding Cyril Delzan's marriage to the Honourable Queenie Somerset.

"Of course, if I had known that you preferred brunettes, I would have asked the Duchess of Bute if she would confer the honour of reserving the supper dance for you. She is a Mexican, and very pretty; they say all Mexican women are pretty."

The vision of Angelinita rose before him as he replied dreamily:

"Pretty? Some of them are infernally beautiful!"

"Cyril! very beautiful," corrected Lady Delzan, tapping him playfully with her fan. "She has taught me how to make a peculiar little pie. It is called a 'chicken tomali.'"

"Eh?" cried Cyril, starting violently. What a flood of sad, yet withal, tender memories these two words awakened within him!

"Chicken tomali," replied Lady Delzan, threading her way through the guests to the ball-room, followed by Cyril. "They are delicious."

Cyril lead his partner into supper, and obtained what she wanted, like one in a dream.

"Are you not going to eat anything yourself, Lord Rosolyn?" asked the Marchioness of Russleton.

"I don't know quite what to have," he replied, smiling at his partner.

"Señor, may I offer you a 'hot cheeken tomali'?" queried a gentle voice at his elbow.

He started. The voice was strangely familiar. Where had he heard it? In a Mexican Plaza. Where?

"Will you not take a 'hot cheeken tomali'?" she queried almost pleadingly.

"Angelinita," he whispered hoarsely.

"Cyril," she murmured gently.

"Angel," he whispered, taking a tomali, "I must see you for a moment. Are you disengaged for No. 20?"

"Yes," she answered hurriedly, "you can have it. I also must see *you*." Then turning to her partner she began to chatter vivaciously to him.

Cyril was like one in a dream till the band struck up the well-known strains of the "Dreamland" waltz; then he claimed the Duchess of Bute as his partner.

After a conventional turn he led Angelinita to the conservatory.

"Angel," he said hoarsely, "so we meet again."

"Yes, Cyril," she replied softly. "The wheel of fortune has indeed been kind to me—from a social standpoint. In love it has been cruel. I knew you would be here to-night, so I brought you a present which you once made me—£1,000," she said gently, taking the crisp notes from her bosom. "The compensation for a shattered dream of love. The ring I will keep, or, if you desire it, will purchase it. It is a monument, in miniature, of the worth of a man's pledge."

She glanced sadly at the rubies in the ring.

"Angel," he said hoarsely, "do not be hard on me.

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Do you think the wrench was nothing to me? What I have done I was forced to do. My life is a living purgatory. With you, your life is bliss. Bute is kind, I know ——"

"My husband died a year ago! just two years after we parted, Cyril!"

"Dead?" echoed Cyril, "and I never heard of it! And you are free!"

"Precisely!"

"And I—I am not!" hissed Cyril.

"If you were, it would not make the slightest difference to me," replied Angel coldly, yet withal affectionately. "Cyril, you spurned my love—true I was only a tomali girl—yet a tomali girl has a heart, and resents as much as the highest dame in the land such an insult—an insult may never be forgotten!"

"Angel, on my honour!"

"Cyril, it suits you badly to speak of honour to me! Here, take your notes; I did not need to have so great a sum. Of what count is a broken heart the more or less in this world?" she exclaimed bitterly, extending the notes.

"Take the money," he returned desperately, "and do what you like with it! I don't want it—burn it!"

"No," she replied, "I will keep it in case you die before me——"

"Well, what if I do?"

"I shall expend it on a wreath;" she smiled sadly. "Or if I die first, I shall leave it to you for the purchase of such like ornament! I may as well say good-bye for ever to-night, Cyril! I leave for Vera Cruz to-morrow!"

"Vera Cruz?"

"Yes!" she replied; then suddenly losing her fortitude, she flung her arms round his neck and sobbed: "Oh, Cyril, Cyril! How could you have served me as you did when I loved you so?"

"Angel, my darling, do not make me feel my character of a cad too much!" he cried desperately, kissing her forehead passionately. "Angel, I loved you once better than the whole world, and, Heaven forgive me, do so still!"

"Cyril, have you forgotten Lady Rosolyn?" The question was asked tremblingly.

"No, Angel! Before I married Queenie I told my step-mother I hated her. She laughed and reminded me of my father's will. I had to submit or else go penniless. Angel, forgive me! I know what I ought to have done, but poverty appalled me. To my shame be it said!"

"Cyril! Cyril! I understand," she replied brokenly. "But now, when our day dream is over, you must promise me one thing."

"Angel, you know that I would promise you a thousand."

A sad smile flickered for one moment across her beautiful face, then, looking steadily into his eyes, she said:

"Cyril, promise me now that you will do what I am about to ask you. On your honour."

"I promise faithfully on my honour, as a peer of England, to do what you ask, so help me Heaven!"

"You must forget me, as if I never existed—and though it breaks my heart to say it, you must never think of me again."

"Angel, I cannot! I will not do this thing!"

"You gave me your word," she answered simply. "And I—I wish it to be kept."

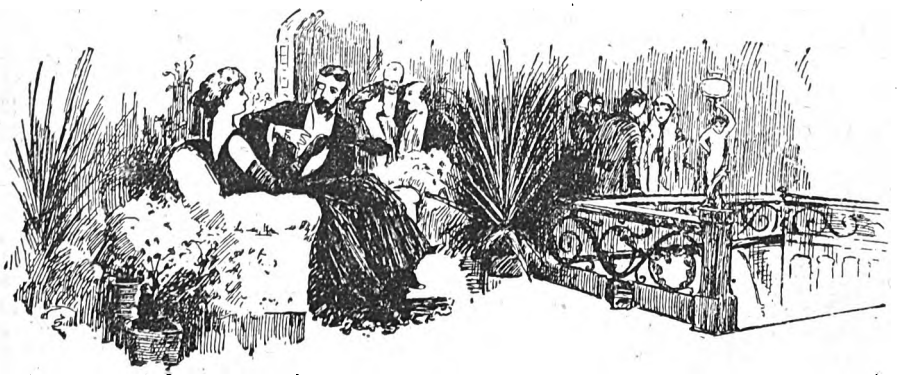
"So be it, Angel; it shall be kept." Then leading her to the ball-room, he stayed beside her moodily till she was claimed by a new partner.

One long, tender glance passed between them; then Cyril, with a stifled groan, passed out of the room and mounted the staircase.

Arrived in his bedroom, he opened a drawer in an escritoire, and, taking out a revolver, examined it and pulled the trigger as many times as there were chambers. It revolved perfectly. He slipped in two cartridges, revolved the chambers till the first loaded one was in position, then placed the barrel against his temple.

Below, the last bars of the final dance were dying away tremblingly on the heated atmosphere, when two sharp, loud reports hushed the buzz of conversation. A dread silence followed the ominous sound, for instinctively everyone realised that Death had visited No. 40 Park Lane.

TRISTAM MONKE.



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The Man Who was a Corpse.

I was two-and-twenty, broke, and on my way to some new mines in North Queensland, Yarroko being my objective point, but had got lost in the heavily-timbered country beyond Cobra. Neither sleep nor food had been mine for two days. When a man is worn out and his stomach is empty, standing under a big cedar tree watching the rain is not precisely entertaining.

It grew darker and darker; my spirits fell lower and lower; the night came. I was just prepared to advance an opinion that life was *not* worth living, when my weary eyes caught sight of a twinkle in the distance. Ten minutes after I was knocking at the door of a good-looking sample of a bush farmhouse. While waiting for admission I noticed that there was a substantial barn within fifty feet of the place.

At last the door was opened by a tall, dark, determined-looking, handsome woman, evidently under thirty, who desired to know my business.

I stated with some hesitancy that I was in search of food and shelter.

The woman looked at me, or, rather, *into* me, as though she suspected I had a much deeper motive in presenting myself. This did not lessen my embarrassment, and I was beginning to stammer out the circumstances that led to my plight when she made an emphatic movement to close the door.

"I am sorry to be an unwelcome guest," I said, preventing her, "but food and rest are absolutely necessary, and I do not propose going any further in search of them."

She seemed rather surprised at my audacity, but did not shut the door, merely contenting herself with the assurance of her inability to accommodate me.

I then offered to forego the meal if she would permit me to dry myself and sleep on the floor of her kitchen. She shook her head.

"May I sleep in your barn?" I pleaded, thinking this would be a guarantee that I had no design on her valuables. Again she shook her head and remarked that it was out of the question.

"Indeed," said I, turning quietly on my heel. "I am going to show you that it is not at all out of the question, and I shall remain in the barn till morning, when I will repay your hospitality by any little job you can suggest. Good-night."

I had gone about ten paces when she called me back, and stepping aside, so that the light from the entry would fall on my face, she stood looking at me as before.

"Well," said I, unabashed, "what is it?"

"It is this," said she. "I have a corpse in the house. My husband died this morning, and he is lying upstairs. I have just thought that you might be willing to sit up with him—I mean 'it'—for a while. I have an errand to do. If I drive, it will only take about two hours. Supposin' you're agreeable to keep the watch till I return, I'll give you supper and a bed!"

I was never timid or superstitious, but, had I been both, these inducements must have overcome my objections, such was my state of exhaustion. At my weird hostess's request I presently went to the barn, where I found a good horse and a country cart. Having harnessed the horse to the vehicle, I drove to the house and tied the horse at the door. I now entered, to find my supper ready, and was about to do justice to the fare when the woman, motioning me to follow her, led the way up a narrow staircase.

In a small, barely-furnished room, stretched on a single bed, lay the corpse—a man of about thirty-eight or forty, with a full beard and a heavy moustache. The woman showing no signs of emotion, I made no remark, nor did I think a reply necessary when, raising her finger towards the corpse, she said, in a casual tone: "He's been gone just ten hours."

We descended almost immediately. My hostess pointed to the supper, and then, hastily donning her cloak and hat, left the house. I heard her drive away, and it was with a queer feeling that I looked at my reflection in a cracked mirror that hung upon the wall.

"Well," I muttered, "this is a strange turn, to say the least." But now Nature began to assert herself once more, and, turning to the table, I sat down and gave my undivided attention to the supper.

I sat eating and drinking for some time, and listening to the patter of the rain outside. Presently I began to feel drowsy, and I fancy that I must really have dozed, for the sound seemed to change. It was like the creaking of footsteps on the stairs. I pulled myself up with a start, for I had every intention of earning my supper, and I had agreed to watch till the hostess returned. The more I listened the more distinct became the footsteps. They were certainly coming down the stairs. I thought I heard the door behind me open, and I turned my head.

The next moment I was powerless to speak or move, for there, standing in the doorway, with his finger on his lips to impose silence, stood—*the corpse*.

My heart seemed to stand still for a second; another, and I had vaulted over the table, and was vainly trying to unfasten the front door. In an instant the corpse was beside me, holding my arm with the grip of a man very much alive.

Having assured himself that I should make no further attempt to get away, the corpse motioned me to a seat, took a chair for himself, and then, in a voice scarcely as sepulchral as I expected to hear, requested to know how I came to be there, and what my business was. It was some minutes before I could steady my voice sufficiently to give the desired details, but at length the corpse (as I shall still call him) became satisfied of my harmless intentions, and then, as if he in turn owed me some sort of explanation, he proceeded as follows:

"I ain't altogether sartain as to the length of time I've

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laid up there," and he pointed to the ceiling, "but I've been under the influence for a considerable spell."

I suppose he saw that I wondered what kind of influence he had reference to, for he quickly added: "Drugs."

"Yes," he continued, in a meditative tone, "she must have been at it for months, off and on."

"Your wife?" I remarked, more for the sake of bringing him out of his reverie than because I was curious.

"Yes," and he nodded, as if what he was about to mention was a very common occurrence. "You see, it's like this. She's got her eye on another mate, a younger man than me, and much handsomer, too," this with an air of strict impartiality. "Yes, there's no denyin' it, much handsomer. Well, they've had their plans fixed for some time, and I s'pose they're in a hurry to get married. This'll account for the extra strong dose, and to think that it didn't take effect after all. She'll be awful disappointed." He shook his head as if he were truly sorry for his murderous spouse.

He now relapsed imto silence, and, turning to the supper table, began to ply a vigorous knife and fork. He ate rapidly as if in obedience to stern duty. He motioned me to join him, but I intimated that my hunger had been appeased, and I sat silently listening to the patter of the raindrops against the window pane.

Having finished his apparently unrelished meal, the corpse arose and produced a jar of tobacco and two pipes, one of which he handed to me. Together we puffed in silence, which was unbroken till the bowls were empty.

"I reckon they'll soon be getting back," was his first remark.

"They?" said I.

"Yes; she's gone after him and she'll bring him back with her to view the body. I guess I'd better be getting back upstairs. It'll take some time to lay myself out naturally. You don't mind being left, I suppose?"

"Not at all."

"Very well, then, just a word, and I'm going."

"You'll just sit here," continued the corpse, "until they get back, and you won't give no information concerning the company you've had. She'll probably ask if everything is all right, and you'll just give a nod, which'll mean that it *is*. I think," he went on, "that you remarked as you were a stranger in these parts."

I nodded.

"Well, you won't be detained beyond your original intentions, but you'd better not change your mind nor act in any way sudden."

I made no reply, and my companion slowly made his way up the narrow flight of stairs.

This noise overhead scarcely ceased when the sound of wheels became distinctly audible. A moment later and she entered the room, accompanied by a tall, robust-looking young fellow, who was laughing and chatting; indeed, they were both pretty merry. The drive had revived the lady's spirits to a wonderful extent.

"Everything all right?" she asked; and then, not waiting for a reply, she bade me go and put the horse up, when I should be shown my bed.

It was now about ten o'clock, as near as I could judge.

I rose to do the woman's bidding, and as I was untying the horse from the door-post, I saw, through the half-open door, my hostess and her companion preparing to ascend the stairs. The rain had ceased, and the stars were shining brightly. I led the horse within a few feet of the barn, when a strange impulse caused me to turn and look at the house.

I don't know what I expected to see, but at that moment two pistol-shots rang out loud and clear on the night air, and I stopped as if they had taken effect in my own body. Then I listened, scarcely daring to breathe; but there was not another sound—nothing to relieve the oppressive silence.

I stood as if in a dream, realising nothing until the horse gave a jerk, indicative of his desire for his stall. I took up the fallen reins and was about to follow, for the horse was now leading me, when a voice at my elbow said:

"You seem to be taking your time about putting that there horse up."

It was the corpse. Without more ado he took the reins from my hands, entered the barn, and, with my assistance, locked the stable and led the way back to the house.

Once inside, he motioned me to a chair beside the fire, and, after filling the pipes as before, he took the other chair, and smoked for over an hour in absolute silence. It must have been midnight when he arose and methodically mixed two glasses of whisky punch. He handed one to me and drank the other himself, this followed by another pipe and another seemingly interminable silence. At length he put away the whisky and tobacco, and began preparing a hot meal. He fried some slices of mutton with a delicacy and attention to detail worthy of a chef in love with his business. This done, he set the table afresh, and I, guessing what was expected of me, joined him in dispatching the eatables.

When he had carefully scraped up the remainder of the third slice, in order to relish the last crust, he cleared his throat, looked round with the satisfaction of one who is about to convey some pleasing intelligence, and said:

"Well, I popped them both off. Just a bullet apiece, and no waste. You see, owing to my position, I got a good drop on 'em."

I made no remark, and he added:

"Like to go and have a look at 'em? They're side by side on the single bed. It's a tight squeeze, but they won't be particular 'bout that."

I replied that I had no desire to see them. I fancy he was rather disappointed at this, for he eyed me suspiciously for a few moments, and then asked:

"Have you got any money?"

I replied in the negative.

"Well, here is some dust," and he handed me a small bag containing about £5 worth of gold. My first impulse was to decline his money, but I thought better of it as I caught the expression of his eyes.

"You see," he began, as I pocketed the gold, "I've been sitting here all night wondering what kind of a disposition I should make of you. A man in my place don't want, naturally, to be the subject of discussion, and the best way to avoid it would be to send you along o' them," and he pointed to the ceiling. "But, on reflection, I think you can be trusted to keep mum, and I'd as soon let you go, so long as you get clean out of the country. It stands to reason that you can't get so clean out without funds as you can with 'em. Now my advice is that, having the necessary wherewithal, you go, before I repent of my decision."

I needed no further persuasion, and, notwithstanding the early hour (it was scarcely daylight), I departed with alacrity, and continued my tramp in the direction of Yarroko. Tired as I was, the walk refreshed my nerves, but my absorbing desire was to lie down and sleep, so I busied myself gathering materials to make a fire.

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These preparations concluded, I made myself as comfortable as circumstances would permit, beneath a large gum tree, and there to the sound of crackling brush, I fell into a blissful slumber. When I awoke it was afternoon, for the sun had already begun his descent. I arose, and remembering my destination, made haste to get over the remaining distance before night should again overtake me.

I had been tramping steadily for an hour or more when I heard the clatter of hoofs behind me. I had scarcely time to turn my head, when, to my amazement, the horse was reined up beside me, and the rider, with a cry to "halt," was covering me with his revolver. "A bushranger," thought I, quite prepared to hand over my gold-dust.

"What do you want?" I stammered, determined to show as bold a front as possible.

"I reckon I want you."

"What for?"

"Ain't you the man that stayed over night at a farm house, back yonder?"

"No," said I, with a presence of mind I could scarcely account for.

"Confound you! You must be the man. If you didn't stay there, where did you stay?"

"In coming along this road, I s'pose you noticed a camp fire under a gum. Well, that's where I stayed," I replied in quiet and measured tones.

"Where are you bound for?"

"Lamb Flats."

Here the rider lowered his revolver, and speaking more gently, said:

"You don't know me without my beard."

I looked into his face and started, as I recognised the corpse of last night.

"Pardn'r," said the man, dismounting, "I kinder repented after you'd gone, so I followed you with the idea of shutting your mouth, but I reckon you're all right and to be trusted. You may take my horse and here's ten pounds. Come, climb up, and having got off, don't stop till you've forgotten where you started from."

"I've got no use for the cash," I answered, "but I'm fond of horses."

The next moment I was in the saddle, and, with a dig of my heels in the horse's side, I was off at full speed.

* * * * *

Twenty years elapsed. I was a man of substance, and was visiting a small but very prosperous border town, representing a rich syndicate. My object was to purchase a very large tract of land necessary for the developing of mines thereby. We had secretly had experts there, and were tolerably certain there were valuable mineral deposits under the property we coveted. It was owned by the mayor of the city. Arriving at the depôt, a tall, fine looking man, white-haired but brawny, came towards me with:

"Are you Mr. Blank, by chance?"

"That's my name, sir."

"Well, I'm the mayor here. You come up to see me. Welcome"—holding out his hand. "To tell you the truth, we've come along in this town in great shape, all but the hotels, so, knowing you were coming, I ran down to say you'll have to come along to my house, where my wife'll make you comfortable."

I was delighted. He had a big, comfortable house, his wife, a bonny woman of forty, was very jolly. There was no style, but every comfort.

Several days elapsed. Our business did not progress We had settled the purchase money all right, but he insisted on royalties if minerals were found. I declared this was so remote a contingency it was not worth a clause, but he held out.

The fifth day after my arrival was a glorious one.

"Let's take a ride over the ground," suggested my host.

Off we went. We admired the scenery, the great trees, enjoyed the vivifying air, and left business alone. Presently he stopped the buggy.

"Hop out, Mr. Blank. I'll show you something."

I descended to terra firma. A short walk into dense timber, and we came across a clearing. I started.

"Somebody's been putting down a trial shaft!" said I.

"Just so," said my host, "and it didn't cost me anything either. Come along, and I'll show you where the men hid and lived while the work was going on."

I felt uncomfortable. Did he know that shaft was our work?

Soon we struck an old farmhouse, rough-looking but evidently weather-proof.

Following my host I walked into the living-room of the house. There was a table and a couple of chairs in the room. My host sat himself down in one; I, half mechanically, took the other. He did not say anything. I experienced the odd sensation one has sometimes of familiarity with a strange place.

"Mr. Blank, don't it strike you that we know each far too well to dicker about this royalty clause?"

"Know each other? Why, I never saw you in my life till a few days ago."

"The ingratitude of this world. Why, I've given you money, cooked your food; I even saved your life!"

"You have?" I jumped up, and peered into his face.

"I suppose I deserve shooting, but I'll be hanged if I've——"

"And I've done my best to stir your memory, too. Look round."

I did. That vague familiarity again.

"Don't the whisky and pipes even bring it back to you?"

It came like a flash. I darted across the room to a door. There should be stairs there. There were.

It was the corpse—of twenty years ago.

"Why, you," I gasped.

"I buried them both out yonder under the trees with my own hand. I recalled you by your voice twenty-four hours after you were under my roof; your voice is peculiar."

"Why, you are a murderer!"

"I've always considered myself my own executioner. If the neighbours had known what she did they'd have lynched her, and him, too. I was merciful."

His voice became vibrant, his expression changed. I recognised him then.

"That woman was starving and degraded. I made her my wife. She tried to murder me. I shot 'em. I was right. I'd do it again. I'm not as rough as I was, but my conscience has never pricked me. My secret's safe with you."

Becoming genial again he added: "Perhaps your syndicate would rather not do business with a man of my peculiar notions, but if they do that royalty clause will have to go in."

It did, quick; for, somehow, though I couldn't quite blame him, and though his home and family were perfectly charming, I wanted to get away.

HARRY ST. MAUR.

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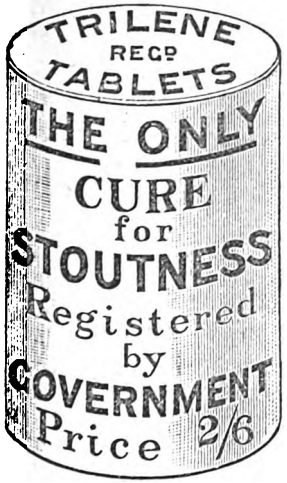
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

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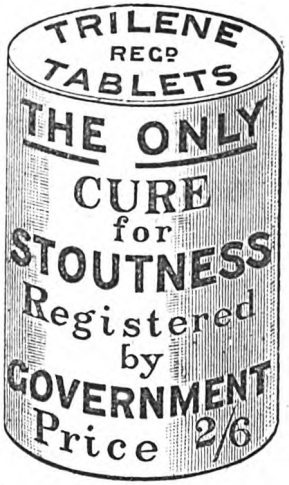

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 2lb. lighter already."

23 Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

Miss M FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

Mr. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st.

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

L. LUDDINGTON, "Sunnyside," Station Road, Sidcup, says: "I have benefited greatly, and have lost a stone."

Mr. MCLEOD, 41, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. P. ATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 4lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Miss A. ATKINS, 328 Southdown Road, Liverpool, writes: "I lost nearly a stone from taking one box."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOODS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets deserve every success."

Mrs. O'CONNOR, 2 Kensington Square Mansions, London, writes: "I am much less stout for taking them."

Surgeon Colonel E. S. BRANDER writes from Ihansi, India, in September, 1897: "Your Tablets in my own experience form an excellent remedy for reducing weight."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Miss J. GUISE, 3 North End, Croydon, says: "I cannot speak too highly of the Tablets; I was stout all my life until a few weeks ago, when I first began your treatment. I was surprised to find they acted so admirably. I am now getting quite a slender figure, besides being better in health."

Balgowan Lodge, Methven, N.B.

Miss MCPHERSON writes: "I have taken a box, and am reduced 1st. in weight."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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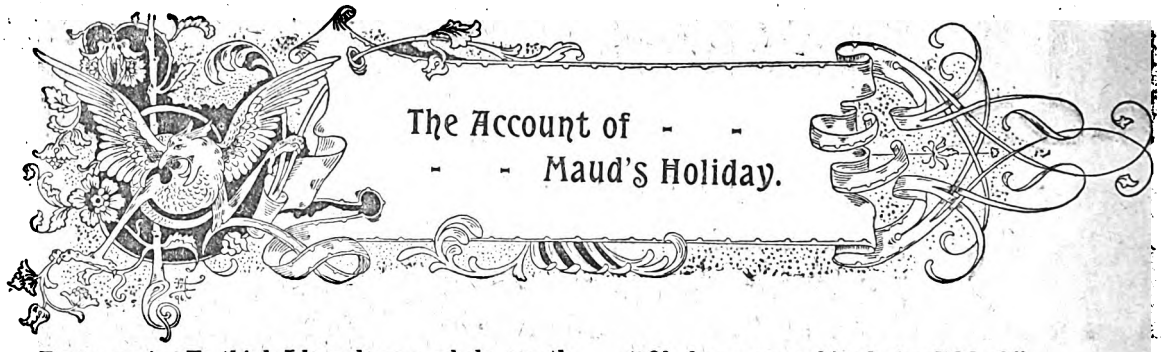

The Account of - - - - Maud's Holiday.

"Dear me! To think I have been a whole month away! Why, I can't realise it. Oh, I've had such a time! The most de—light—ful holiday I ever had. I wish I were going back again to-day! Aunt and Uncle are so awfully kind, you know. They would do anything for one, and—oh, do you know, I met the nicest young—but you won't tell, will you?"

"No, no, of course not."

"Well, I'll tell you how it was. You know Mr. Grundy, the lawyer, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's a young lawyer with him now, a Mr. Rosavear—Vincent Rosavear, his name is—pretty name, isn't it?"

"Very. And he's a lawyer, is he?"

"Why, yes; but let me tell you. The McManuses—you know the McManuses—they had a party—a big party—just a week after I came—oh, it was a lovely party, too! I enjoyed myself thoroughly at it. But really, you'd have laughed—I didn't know Vin—I mean, Mr. Rosavear, you know, or anything about him, never saw him or heard of him before; but just after the first dance Miss Harris came to me and said she had a friend who wished to have an introduction to me, and asked me if I had any objections. Well, of course, what could I do? I wasn't going to tell her if I objected to her friend; so I just said I should be pleased to meet him, and then she brought him over and introduced him—and that was how I met Vin—I mean Mr. Rosavear. Wasn't it peculiar?"

"Why—er—yes—that is, it was——"

"Yes, but to think of him asking for an introduction—you know, that's what amused me. Well, we had several dances together—a lovely dancer he is too—oh, he can waltz just to perfection. And then he is so distinguished looking! I noticed it when he was dancing with Miss Harris—just as straight and tall—he must be quite six feet, for I can stand easily under his arm, I know—well, let me see, what was I saying? Oh, yes—he escorted me home that night—I didn't care. I thought, of course, I would never see him again."

"And didn't you?"

"Didn't I! I should say I did! Why, he was up to uncle's almost every night while I was there—he is a friend of uncle's you know—oh, we used to go out riding and to parties, to the rink and the theatre and I don't know where. What did I care? I thought I would have a good time while I was there at all events. But, oh, we had such times too, at home. He's such a lovely singer, you know. How I used to enjoy just being in the drawing-room and hearing him sing! Dear! He has such stirring black eyes, too—long dark hair, and a big moustache—a lovely moustache—I wish you knew him—oh, wait, I'll show you his likeness."

"Oh, he gave you his photo, did he?"

"Why, yes, two of them—I accepted them. What did I need to care? I knew I'd never see him again. He wanted mine, but I refused to give him one; so then he made me promise him one when he comes to see—to—to I mean, when he comes next June——"

"What! Is he coming here next June?"

"So he said, but pshaw! He won't come, I know he won't. It was only in fun, you know——"

"Why, Maud, where did you get the ring?"

"Good gracious! You notice everything! Well, it was one night he happened to take hold of my hand——"

"Oh, Maud, you didn't surely——"

"No, indeed I didn't—I just jerked it away at once, and—and gave him a look—but in a few minutes more he said to me: 'Let me look at your hand, Maud—I mean Miss Finley,' and smiled so mischievously that I thought he was only in fun, and before I knew another thing he caught my hand and sque—and held it so tight I couldn't get away—he is so strong!—and before I knew, he had slipped this ring on my finger—isn't it pretty? I couldn't help it! But what did I need to care? I knew I would likely never see him again.

"Well, that was New Year's night. Next evening he came again, and it was so stormy we stayed in the house. Oh, it was lovely to sit there with him and look into the fire while the shadows were flickering about the room, and we talked and talked there for hours about people we had known, and about how we had lived and how we'd like to live for the future, and I don't know what all. But, by-and-bye, he turned to me and said: 'Doesn't the fire make one feel lonely?' and I said: 'Yes, it seems to give one such a strange, weird sort of feeling—I think I'll light the lamp, it will help to cheer you perhaps.' 'No, no,' he said, 'just let's sit here and talk. I'd like to know more about you, a great deal.' 'Would you really?' I said. I thought he was joking. Well, I didn't light the lamp, and it kept getting darker and darker in the room, and only a little flame flickering away there in the grate, and then he—he just—he just kissed me."

"Oh! Oh, Maud Finley!"

"Oh, I was angry! I tell you I showed him what a temper I had, but he just caught hold of my hands and—and pleaded so hard for me to forgive him, and seemed so sorry, that, when he said he was only joking and promised never to do so again, I forgave him, and we made it up again, and I asked him to forgive me for being angry with him, and—and promised to—to—to be——

"But the rest is a secret. I really must not tell it yet."

W. A. Robertson.

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EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE

2 GALLONS FOR 4½D

It is incumbent upon every person who would remain in health, through the great and sudden varieties of weather peculiar to our country, to exercise a zealous watchfulness over the body and its functions to the end that they may always be in readiness to ward off illness. A prudent person will see the policy of taking constant precaution to maintain the blood at an even temperature and in a healthy condition. It is almost incredible to realize how very few people are conversant with the thirst-quenching and cooling properties of the lemon. The acid of the lemon is a natural acid, and eminently suitable to the human system. It cools the over-heated blood, allays feverishness, and keeps down eruptive tendencies. The juice of the lemon, therefore, forms one of the most valuable beverages for summer drinking. The Eiffel Tower Lemonade is lemon at its very best. Why? Because it is a concentration from the very finest lemons the world produces. Sicily is noted for its lemons, and it is here the fruit used in the Eiffel Tower Lemonade is grown. Only the choicest lemons are selected, and these undergo the first stages of concentration on the spot. The final stages of manufacture take place in Kent. Owing to the preliminary treatment received in Sicily the natural flavour and delicious aroma of the newly-gathered lemon is retained, and the result is a refreshing, healthful, wholesome, and natural lemonade, which allays thirst, and revives drooping energies. No undesirable chemicals are added, as is done in so many other cases. By using Eiffel Tower Lemonade you have a dainty fruit drink always on hand, so that friends dropping in for a friendly chat may be supplied with a refreshing draught that will be as welcome as the gentle shower or the cooling breeze. Remember, it only costs 4½d. for two gallons. Of all Grocers, or a sample will be sent free for six stamps, G. FOSTER CLARK & Co., No. 115 Eiffel Tower Factory, Maidstone.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

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Monthly. Roadster, £10. 16/8 Road Racer. £11. 18/4 Lady & Gent, £12 12/- 21/- £14 14/- 24/8 £16 16/- 28/- Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, sent post free. WERNICKE MACHINISTS' CO. LTD., 75 and 76 Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.; and at Piccadilly Circus, exactly opposite the Criterion, London, W.. JUNO Riding School, 1,700ft.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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The Lustre Lasts!
Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

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The wonderful Metal Polisher. Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

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Tobacconists Commencing. See Illd. Guide (259 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000 Tobacconists Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

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1,000 GOLD WATCHES FREE

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To introduce our now celebrated Soap to 1,000 more readers of this paper, we have decided to give away 1,000 GOLD WATCHES ABSOLUTELY FREE OF COST. These Watches are REAL GOLD HALL-MARKED, and at retail would cost upwards of 5 GUINEAS. If you want one write to us without delay. With your letter send us 1s. P.O., for which we will send you a tablet of Dr. Garland's Facial Soap and our offer, on complying with which the Watch will be sent free by registered post. We have overwhelming testimony that our Facial Soap is the best ever offered to the British public, and our idea for giving away the Watches is that you may talk about us among your friends, and recommend our Soap wherever possible. Miss H. HUNT, Potbridge, Odiham, Hants, writes: "The gold watch arrived quite safe this morning. I am very pleased with it. Many thanks to you for sending it."

MAY, GARLAND & CO. (Dept. 112), Cheltenham House 15 MORTIMER ST., LONDON, W.

KEATING'S POWDER

DESTROYS BUGS FLEAS MOTHS BEETLES

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ON THE BEST AUTHORITY.

J. J. C.—Yes, the soldiers who guard the Bank of England during the night receive special pay for that duty. The subaltern receives one guinea, the sergeants half-a-crown, and the privates one shilling each.

N. G. A.—There are now only five Scottish regiments which wear the kilt. These are the Black Watch (Royal Highlanders, late 42nd and 73rd), Seaforth Highlanders (late 72nd and 78th), Gordon Highlanders (late 73rd and 92nd), Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (late 79th), and the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders (late 91st and 93rd).

DRIVER.—The right of permission to allow memorials to be admitted to Westminster Abbey lies with the Dean. The dimensions of the proposed memorial must be first submitted to the Chapter, and by this body is fixed the fee which ancient custom decrees should be paid. The site is then selected by the Dean. For a bust the cost is usually £200, or thereabouts.

C F. L.—The white rhinoceros has become nearly if not quite extinct. There are two stuffed specimens in England and one in the Capetown Museum.

BARONET.—The chief insignia of a baronet's coat of arms is derived from the "Red Hand" of the O'Neill family. It is said that in an early expedition to Ireland, it was given out that whoever first touched the shore, should possess the territory he touched. Seeing that another boat was likely to outstrip his, O'Neill cut off his left hand and threw it on the coast. The princes of Ulster were descended from this O'Neill, and the motto of the O'Neills to this day is "Red Hand of Erin." When James I. (in 1611) created 200 baronets in payment of £1,000 each, it was ostensibly for the amelioration of Ulster, and they were allowed to place the "open red hand" on their arms.

FIRE.—About 300 theatres have been destroyed by fire in Europe during the present century.

A. K.—Mr. R. E. Lawson of Stanhope Street, Blackfriars, originated binding in cloth. The first book bound in cloth was a volume of manuscript music. That was about 1823. Mr. Leighton was the first to stamp the cloth with gold titles; previously, printed labels were stuck on the cloth.

S. I.—There are about 100,000 islands, large and small, scattered about the oceans of the world. There are 5,500, at least, on the coasts of America.

SLANG.—Pierce Egan, the author of a book called "Life in London," and several other stories, was the first to introduce modern slang-writing. That was about sixty years ago. Slang is, of course, not at all a modern invention; it was known to the classic Greeks and Romans, and abounds in the works of Aristophanes, Terence, and others.

CAPUT.—The last person to suffer death in England by being beheaded was Simon Fraser (Lord Lovat). He was executed on Tower Hill on April 9th, 1747, for treachery.

SCHOOL.—The Greek youths may not have gone to college in the modern acceptation of the phrase. Their philosophers used to take a stand at some appointed place, and impart instruction to hundreds of young men who were eager to acquire it. There was the philosopher Zens, who taught in the porch (*stoa*), from which we get the word *stoic*. There were the groves of Academus, where the poetical pupils could wander about while receiving instruction. This is not "going to school," say some people. But the pupils went somewhere to be taught, which is really "going to school."

R. J.—You should apply to the Copyright Office, Stationers' Hall, London, E.C., if you wish to copyright a piece of music.

E. G.—There are seven ancient brooms in the Cairo Museum. These relics of olden times are made of straw and closely resemble the straw brooms in use at the present time.

D. W.—The Speaker derives his name from the fact that he is the spokesman of the House of Commons when addressing the Sovereign. You are wrong in supposing that the Speaker can never vote; when the votes recorded by each party are equal, he is entitled to a casting vote.

L. M.—The sign & is a ligature combining the letters *et* (Latin for *and*). In the old form (E) the letters can be seen, but the modern style is a corrupt form.

N. N.—If you see a man 328 yards off, he appears to you exactly one-third his proper height. At ninety-two yards further off he appears one-fourth his height, and at 109 yards still further, he appears one-fifth.

A. S. G.—There are about 4,050 postmen in the Metropolis, who cover an average of twelve miles a day.

CHARLIE.—If you want something inexpensive and easily procured to soften the water in which you wash, drop the peel of an orange into the jug overnight. This will soften the water, and turn it into a pleasant skin tonic.

T. T. asks: "Is it true that etiquette forbids judges and judicial officers to ride in an omnibus?"——Not in this country; but in France, where, if a judge does not own a private carriage, he must either take a cab or walk.

A. S. G.—France was the first of the European countries to grant civil rights to the Jews.

K. H.—Yes, the word "hairbreadth," now used for an infinitesimal space, was once a regular measure. It was the width of sixteen hairs laid side by side.

DICK.—Good champagne corks cost when new from threepence-halfpenny to fivepence apiece. They must be absolutely flawless, and are cut by hand from the best quality of Colonia bark.

W. W.—Yes, hunting is a very costly sport. It is estimated that £800 is the average cost of every day spent with the hounds.

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IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.

GIGANTIC CLEARANCE SALE.

£50,000 worth of Goods Offered at Half Price.

THE ENORMOUS STOCK OF CARPETS, CURTAINS, SHEETS, BLANKETS, QUILTS, &C., MUST BE CLEARED WITHOUT REGARD TO COST, OWING TO THE L.C.C. REQUIRING PRESENT PREMISES FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS.

New Premises having to be acquired by us, this Sale is held in order to Clear Out Heavy Stocks previous to the removal. NEW GOODS have to be sacrificed, together with all Regular Stocks, as it would be almost impossible to remove the Valuable and Heavy Stocks to New Premises without great risk and loss by damage to the Goods in transit, and this renders AN ABSOLUTE CLEARANCE IMPERATIVE. The magnificent opportunity is therefore afforded the readers of *Short Stories* of buying the NEW SEASON'S GOODS that are just coming in fresh from the looms at prices lower than the cost of production; and in many cases the Goods are being offered at less than HALF PRICE.

This Offer Will Not be Repeated.

ALL GOODS WARRANTED ABSOLUTELY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. Money Willingly Returned if not Approved

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 48in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed.

4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.

Lot 2.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.

Lot 30.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 84in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed.

9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.

7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d.

Lot 2.—7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. per pair, measuring 3½yd. long, by 52in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges and handsome double borders; wash easily. 3 pairs for 11s. 3d. Money returned if not approved.

25s. Special Heavy Blankets for 14s. 9d.

Lot 23.—25s. Special Heavy Witney Yorkshire Blankets for 14s. 9d., measuring 75in. by 96in. Manufactured entirely of pure long staple wool, bleached by the sun and beautifully white. Give endless wear, and are easily washed. For perfection of finish, durability, and economy, they are unequalled. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 42s. Money returned if not approved.

15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d.

Lot 31.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 90in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 3.—Specially handsome Drawing-room Design, entirely new and most successful. In white or cream, with scolloped and taped edges, made from thoroughly sound cotton yarns; warranted to wear well. Sale price, 5s. 11d. per pair. Each Curtain measures 3½yd. long by 60in. wide. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 17s. Money returned if not approved.

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Size	Weight.	Price per Pair.	3 Pairs for
53in. by 70in.	... 4lb.	... 6s. 3d.	... 18s.
60in. by 80in.	... 6lb.	... 7s. 9d.	... 22s.
70in. by 90in.	... 8lb.	... 11s. 6d.	... 33s.
75in. by 96in.	... 9lb.	... 13s. 0s.	... 37s.
80in. by 99in.	... 10lb.	... 15s. 3d.	... 43s.
86in. by 104in.	... 11lb.	... 16s. 9d.	... 48s.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved.

3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.

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Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned

Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths**, made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.

Size 54in. by 45in., price 1s. 2d. each, or 3 for 3s. 3d.
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Lot 50.—**THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER** is made to the readers of *Short Stories* only. On receipt of Postal Order for **6s.**, or 74 stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS**, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 30 different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and **large enough to cover any ordinary sized room.** These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company BELOW THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained Direct from our Looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits.

GIVEN AWAY.—WITH EVERY CARPET WE SHALL ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY A VERY HANDSOME RUG TO MATCH; OR WE WILL SEND TWO CARPETS AND TWO RUGS FOR 10/6.

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5 ...	10 6 by	9 0 ...	10/0 ...	15/6
6 ...	12 0 by	9 0 ...	11/6 ...	18/0

Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7 ...	12 0 by	10 6 ...	13/6 ...	20/6
8 ...	13 6 by	10 6 ...	15/3 ...	24/0
9 ...	12 0 by	12 0 ...	15/3 ...	24/0
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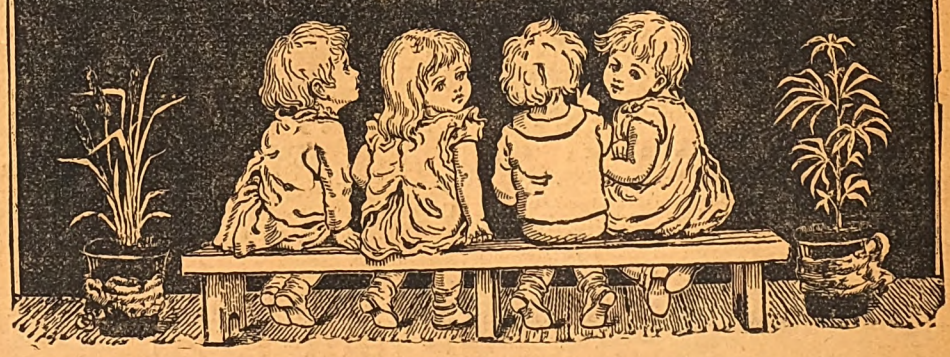

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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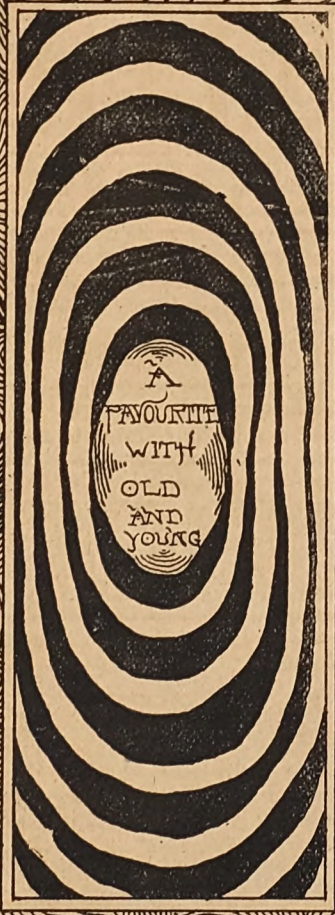

No. 495.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending June 25th, 1898.

TWO ACCIDENTS THAT DID GOOD.

They had agreed to differ about it. Husbands and wives who agree without differing are a trifle old-fashioned and grumpy nowadays; husbands and wives who differ without agreeing are also somewhat behind these times, when a certain calm independence is the fashionable keynote of marital existence, and Mr. and Mrs. Buller were eminently up-to-date.

The first two years of their married life had been spent practically out of the world, in consequence of the state of health of Mr. Buller's father. Then had come their succession to the property, and a period of retirement—they were a trifle old-fashioned in those days, it will be seen, and then they had launched out into the world of Society.

They went with the stream with that enthusiasm which not infrequently attends new experiences. She was an extremely pretty and dainty little personage, with charming wit, and a very few weeks of social life put quite an extraordinary polish on her.

He was good-looking too, not particularly clever, but quite capable of following the lead set him by his fellows, and cheery and good-natured withal.

There was plenty of money; they became immensely

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popular, and found a thorough-going Society life altogether delightful.

The head of each was a little turned, perhaps, by the end of their first season. Each was secretly convinced that the old "spooney" relations would not do. It was ridiculous to care for the society of your husband or wife. It was "the thing" to live independent lives. Independent lives, however, are not always, it appears, to be achieved at a word by two wholesome-minded young people living in the same house and sharing the same round of pleasure.

Alice Buller was a coquette, but there was a touch of delicate haughtiness in her, and she was incapable of a vulgar flirtation. Also, George Buller would have been incapable of jealousy where she was concerned, so that when at last a tangible subject of dispute presented itself husband and wife alike jumped at it with avidity.

The subject in question was thoroughly up-to-date—which was as it should be. At first it cost Mr. Buller a pang to realise that the side he had accidentally adopted was that behind the times. But he had an obstinate fibre in him, so he nailed his colours to the mast like a man.

The moot point was the bicycle craze.

He would have none of it, in any shape or form; he derided it where men were concerned; for women, he declared it not unsuitable—he knew his age better than that—but, what was far worse, ridiculously unbecoming.

Mrs. Buller, on the other hand, threw herself into the movement heart and soul. Her bicycle was for her the centre of the universe. Nothing could have been better. The husband and wife agreed to differ, as has been said, in most approved fashion, and for the rest of the season they hardly met.

For people who had arrived at so desirable an understanding, however, they were arguing the question rather hotly as they sat over the dinner table on a certain evening in February.

"Where does the fun come in?" Mr. Buller was demanding indignantly; "that's what I can't make out! Of course, one wouldn't care about the thing being dangerous if the game were worth the candle."

Mrs. Buller was drawing patterns on the tablecloth with her dessert fork.

"That's obvious," she returned with spirit, "or you wouldn't want to ride a horrid horse."

"Horses don't side-slip—or whatever you call it."

"Bicycles don't shy—neither do they rear."

Mr. Buller rose wrathfully and walked to the fireplace, taking up a majestic position on the hearthrug.

"One thing is you'll soon be tired of it," he observed. "You never keep a thing up for long."

Mrs. Buller rose impetuously. She appeared to have lost her temper.

"I love it more than ever," she cried, "and I always shall!" With which incoherent observation she withdrew.

The breakfast-room was empty when Mr. Buller strolled down at about half-past nine on the following morning. This did not surprise him, but the message delivered to him by a servant did.

"Mrs. Buller told me to say, if you please, sir," said the man, "that she has ridden over to Fernhill on her bicycle, and will lunch there."

"What time will she be back?" demanded her husband.

"About five o'clock, sir," was the answer.

Mr. Buller unfolded his newspaper and ground his teeth.

"The whole day!" he ejaculated to himself. "Well, I must say—— However, she'll be tired. Forty miles there and back; and then she'll go to sleep all the evening. Well, hanged if I care! Wonder at what time she started, and how far she's got."

As a matter of fact, though Mrs. Buller had started some time since, she had not made any remarkable progress. It was a delightful, spring-like day, but the state of the roads was not all that could be desired. At this identical moment she was walking along a particularly unpleasant combination of ruts and mud, wheeling her bicycle.

Mrs. Buller had her detractors, as have all successful people; and there were those who said that she rode a bicycle because she looked so well in the dress. Her short, tailor-made skirt and neat hat certainly suited her to perfection this morning, and her little feet, in the daintiest imaginable shoes, were a delight to behold. But Mrs. Buller did not appear to be thinking of her appearance just then—she was obviously taking no pleasure in it.

Her piquant face was rosy with air and exercise, but it was distinctly overcast in expression, and her every movement, as she wheeled her machine with incredible carelessness over the ruts, was expressive of boredom and disgust. The bad bit of road passed, she stood for an instant contemplating her bicycle with an indescribable expression.

"I shall never be able to give the thing up," she said to herself despairingly. "Never! If I did, he'd think I wanted—Oh, what a bore it is!"

She mounted as she spoke with a despairing sigh. Perhaps she was careless, perhaps the wheel slipped. At any rate, the next thing of which she was aware was a general upheaval of the universe, which left her lying in the road with a broken bicycle beside her, and every bone in her body, as it seemed, dislocated.

"Oh, what a silly I've been!" she wailed despairingly, and then she fainted.

It was not a lonely road, fortunately, and she was soon found, and taken home. The doctor was sent for, and enjoined by Mr. Buller on his departure to come yet again in the evening; and on coming downstairs after his second visit he found Mr. Buller hanging about in the hall. The doctor did not wait to be questioned.

"Going on splendidly," he said cheerily. "Feverish to-night, of course. But with a broken arm and a very nasty sprained ankle that's only to be expected."

For a man whose sentiments towards his wife are of an eminently philosophical nature, Mr. Buller was looking extraordinarily pale and wretched. He drew a quick sigh of satisfaction; then he said, with an air of stern superiority which ill disguised an undertone of ferocious vindictiveness:

"Wretched things, these bicycles! I've always said so." Then he added: "Is there any reason why I shouldn't see my wife? Would it do her any harm, I mean?"

The doctor screwed up his lips doubtfully.

"Well," he said, "no, hardly that. But she is feverish, as I said, and if she would rather be quiet—why, her wishes must be respected, you know."

"Confound it!" ejaculated the husband, and wheeling round he stood staring into the fire.

"Going out to-morrow?" inquired Dr. Willoughby, as he drew on his gloves. The hounds were to meet next day.

"I don't know."

"I should, if I were you," was the answer. "There's

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nothing to be anxious about in your wife's condition, and—she's better quiet, you know."

A gloomy man was Mr. Buller, to judge from his appearance as he sat in his smoking-room that night, and a gloomy man was he as he came down next morning. He had been to Mrs. Buller's door and had been sternly denied admittance.

He pulled himself together, however, at the meet, and answered the numerous inquiries after his wife with an off-hand nonchalance which did him credit.

There was a long interval of standing about by the cover, and Mr. Buller's mare, a young one, could not stand it. When they got away eventually she bolted, rushed at a fence, missed it, and came down heavily.

It was Dr. Willoughby who undertook to break the news of her husband's accident to Mrs. Buller. She was more feverish that afternoon and dreadfully depressed, but he set about his task with the slightest possible circumlocution.

"Well, Mrs. Buller," he said, "you're not to have the sick list all to yourself, after all. Horses, it seems, can play tricks as well as bicycles."

Mrs. Buller turned her head sharply. She was a good deal bruised, and there was little else that she could turn.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, as the colour rushed into her woe-begone face. "Not George?" Then, as she read assent in the doctor's face, she turned white to her lips. "Oh!" she gasped, with a sudden change of tone. "He's not hurt badly?"

"Hurt badly? No, of course not," returned the doctor cheerily; "a very neatly fractured leg, that's all—a companion to your arm. Nothing to faint about, I assure you."

"I'm not going to faint," declared Mrs. Buller; indeed, a considerable amount of colour had come back to her cheeks, and her eyes were dancing. "Poor old boy! I'm dreadfully sorry."

Her voice gave a curiously different meaning to the words. "I know what horrid pain it is, don't I? But I've always told him that horses were quite as—I mean, I've always told him that you run great risks with horses. How did it happen, doctor? Is he pretty comfortable? Is there anything I have for my arm he would like? Take him some of those grapes, will you? He'll be so thirsty."

During the weeks that followed, the respective attendants on Mr. and Mrs. Buller had a very busy time of it. Each patient took quite an extraordinary interest in the symptoms and progress of the other, and each was, of course, confined to his or her room.

The sprained ankle made progress quicker than the broken limbs. When Mrs. Buller was able to be moved to a sofa, Mr. Buller being still in his bed, Dr. Willoughby suggested that Mrs. Buller should be wheeled into his room and pay him a little visit.

"I dare say he's very dull, poor thing!" she said. "I don't know that there is any reason why I should not go to-day."

"I don't know that there is," said Dr. Willoughby. So that afternoon there was great activity in both the sick rooms. Mr. Buller's nurse had to arrange flowers, to put away this, to straighten that and to shake up the cushions of the arm chair a dozen times. Mrs. Buller's nurse had to change her patient's dressing gown twice, and her maid was requisitioned to do her hair. And at about 4 o'clock a knock came at Mr. Buller's door, and Mrs. Buller appeared, leaning on a stick and escorted by her nurse. She was received by the nurse and established with much circumstance in the arm chair prepared for her reception.

"I'm awfully glad to see you," said Mr. Buller, with constrained politeness. He was rather pathetic in his enforced recumbency, and he was looking very white and thin. "You must have had a horrid time."

"Pretty well," she said; "and so have you, I'm afraid."

"Willoughby talks of sending me to Bournemouth," said Mr. Buller.

The conversation had so far been characterised by the utmost nonchalance and composure, each party having steadily avoided a glance in the direction of the other; but at this juncture he, with a self-confidence entirely unjustified by events, turned politely in his wife's direction. She looked round at the same moment; their eyes met, and—it was all over!

"Alice, my little girl, how white you look!"

"Oh, George, my old darling, how thin you are!"

The ejaculations were simultaneous, and before they had died away, Mrs. Buller, with a little hop and the assistance of the table, had reached the sofa, and had subsided on to the floor with her face buried on her husband's breast.

"Oh, George," she cried, "you were quite right; bicycles are horrid things, and so are horses. Oh, George, you might have been killed!"

"I might, darling!" he said incoherently. "You were quite right, too, Alice, dearest; it's been the very deuce of a time! Do you know how long it is since you really kissed me?"

They went to Bournemouth together, and each was so busy superintending the complete recovery of the other that they quite forgot to be up-to-date, and are no more a strictly Society couple.

MARGARET HUME.

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BAB-EL-HAWIYAT.

LOUNGING on a bench under the tall date palms in the market-place of Hammam-el-Enf, I smoked a rank *cherbli* in dreamy laziness. The day was dying; the blazing African sun sank, flooding the broad Bay of Tunis with its blood-red afterglow, and the giant palms cast their long shadows over the hot, sun-blanched stones.

There are no half lights in Northern Africa; all is either glaring brilliance or sombre shadow. Little twilight is there in that land of mosques and marabouts; night follows the death of day with astonishing rapidity. Even while I sat darkness crept on; the squatting, chattering crowd of white burnoused Moors and Arabs and red-fezzed negroes had dispersed, and the sun-baked little village seemed almost deserted.

Suddenly the white figure of an Arab woman glided slowly and ghostlike from the deep shadow of the ilexes. Like all others of her sex, she was enshrouded in a *haick*, and the lower portion of her face was hidden by her thick white veil, only a magnificent pair of black sparkling eyes and a forehead upon which rows of gold sequins tinkled being visible.

Halting for a few seconds she stared at me as if in surprise, then in soft musical Arabic gave me peace, exclaiming:

"Sadness dwelleth in the heart of the Roumi. Of a verity thou art not more sad than I," and, sighing, she drew her *adjar* closer across her face and was about to pass on.

"Sad, art thou?" I exclaimed, in the same language, surprised that she should address me, an officer of chasseurs. In the dim light I could distinguish that her hose were of the finest white silk, that her tiny shoes were Paris made and of patent leather, and that the hand which held the *haick* about her was loaded with valuable rings. "Loosen thy tongue's strings, O one of beauty," I said gallantly. "Tell me, why speakest thou unto me, an infidel; why unhappiness hath fallen upon thee."

"Ah, no!" she replied, in a hoarse half-whisper, glancing round in apparent fear. "My people must not observe me having speech with thee. Ah, Allah may bring one of us certainty before to-morrow, and—if thou wouldst only help me!"

"What service can I render?" I asked quickly, well aware that the fact of her speaking to a European in a public place was of itself a very grave offence in the eyes of the fanatical Aíssáwà. The barrier between Al-Islâm and Christianity in Tunis is still unsurmountable.

"First thou must trust me," she said frankly. "I am called Fathma Khadidja; and thy name—already I know it. It is dangerous for me to hold converse here with you. Let thy footsteps follow mine. Come, and may Allah, who knoweth the innermost parts of the breasts of men, shower upon thee bounteous blessings," and she turned and started off with that peculiar waddling gait of Arab women.

I hesitated. If really in distress, it was strange that she had not called upon her own people to help her, instead of requesting an infidel and a stranger to render assistance.

No, I decided not to go, and sat watching her receding figure cross the market-place where slaves were sold even within recent years, and disappear in the shadow of the mosque.

In an hour I had forgotten the mysterious Fathma and her troubles, and returned to Tunis.

Next afternoon, as I entered my quarters in the Kasbah my Arab servant handed me a note. As I tore it open it emitted an odour of geranium, the favourite perfume of the harem. Having read the three long lines of sprawly Arabic characters it contained, I placed the missive in my pocket and turned away. If I valued my life, I was to meet Khadidja that evening. Was that a threat or a warning? During the remainder of that day I lounged outside the cafés and pondered deeply. For hours I ruminated over absinthe and mazagran, cassis and bock; and, after much consideration, I at length resolved to keep the appointment and ascertain the extent of the mysterious danger of which she wrote.

At the appointed hour I awaited her at a secluded spot outside the Bab Alewa. The clock of the Mosque of Sici Mahrez close by struck solemnly, and as the last sound died away I heard the *frou-frou* of feminine garments, as a shrouded figure advanced to me.

"Ah, so thou hast kept thine appointment, O Roumi!"

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she exclaimed, stretching forth to me a soft, white hand. "Thou thinkest because I believe in the One, and in Mahomet, his Prophet, that I am unworthy thy regard; that I am not be trusted, eh?" Then she laughed lightly, adding, "Come let us fly on the wings of haste. I want to have serious speech with thee upon a matter that affecteth us both."

Without replying, I walked on beside her, wondering whether she were ugly or beautiful. Crossing a deserted garden, we passed out to where two asses were tethered, and mounting them rode away into the darkness. I remember that we went through several villages, and at length came to a larger place built upon the low cliffs, where a number of spacious flat-roofed houses overlooked the sea.

Suddenly she dismounted before a low arched door in one of the great square, inartistic, whitewashed residences, and placed her fingers upon her lips indicative of silence. Taking a key that was suspended round her neck, she unlocked the door and led me into a dark passage so thickly carpeted that my sword trailed noiselessly as she guided me onward.

Once I caught sight of a spacious *patio*, rendered cool by a splashing fountain and green with many leaves; then through two small chambers we passed, until we came to a closed door, which she opened, and I found myself in a spacious, dimly-illumined apartment, decorated in quaint arabesques of dark crimson and dull gold. Everything was rich and luxurious. The air was heavy with sensuous odours rising in a thin blue column from the gold perfuming pan. On the floor lay costly Arab rugs, and a couple of lion skins were thrown down on each side of the centre mat. A *derbouka* and a *ginkri*, fashioned from a tortoiseshell, lay thrown aside, and from a magnificent hanging lamp of gold, a soft, mellow light was diffused, though scarcely sufficient to show the heavy draperies that concealed the walls.

"Rest thee a moment, and I will return," my mysterious veiled guide said; and then, drawing aside some of the silken hangings she disappeared through a door that had been hidden.

With hands behind me, I slowly wandered round, wondering what apartment of the house this was, when some half-finished embroidery that had apparently been tossed hurriedly aside upon a coffee stool of inlaid pearl and silver caught my eye. That told me the truth. My heart gave a sudden bound. I was in the harem!

A French novel lay open on one of the little tables. I took it up, and, as I stood in wonderment, a movement behind me caused me to turn, and then I beheld the most beautiful woman I had ever gazed upon. She was not more than two-and-twenty, with a complexion fresh as a northener's, features that were perfect, pretty lips that parted in a glad smile, and dress that was the most gorgeous I had ever seen.

The ugly *haick* had been replaced by a jacket of palest leaf-green brocaded silk, beneath which showed a rose-pink velvet vest; and, in the place of the baggy trousers, she wore the *serroual*, or wide trousers, of silken gauze. Her tiny, bare feet were thrust into slippers of rose velvet; on her head was set jauntily a little crimson skull cap embroidered with seed pearls; and her *fouta*, or sash, was of a tricolor-striped silk richly ornamented with gold. Upon her bare arms and ankles diamonds flashed and sparkled with a thousand fires, and bangles jingled as she walked. She dazzled and fascinated me.

With an apology for having left me, she sank slowly among her cushions with graceful abandon, at the same

time loosing one of her slippers, and motioning me to a seat near her.

"Thou thinkest it strange," she said, "perhaps even thou art angry, that I have brought thee hither alone unto this gilded cage. But I must speak with thee—to warn thee;" and her dimpled chin rested upon her dainty palm as she, with seriousness, looked straight into my eyes.

"To warn me! Of what?"

"Thou art threatened," she answered slowly. "Thou wilt, perhaps, remember that a month ago thou wert in Kabylia; and left Fort National for Tizi Ouzou. Thou hadst the careless indifference that youth giveth, and, no doubt, thou wert prepared to meet Eblis himself if he promised an adventure. On that occasion with whom didst thou travel?"

"I journeyed in company of a wealthy man of thy people, who was returning from the wine market."

"True, O friend," she replied. "A week ago thou didst describe the journey in the *Moniteur de l'Algerie* and ridiculed thy companion. See here—!" and she stretched forth her hand and took up a paper containing the article in which I had treated the journey in a comic vein, and had denounced in no measured terms the religious bigotry of Al-Islam.

"Thou art a *homard;* and that man," she continued, "hath sworn upon the book of Everlasting Will to kill thee!"

"How dost thou know this, O thou whose face is rivalled only by the sun?" I asked quickly.

"Because—because the man thou hast ridiculed is my husband!" she replied, rising and adding wildly: "Because I overheard the villainous scheme that he hath planned with his brother to take thy life, and at the risk of mine own honour I determined to save thee. Allah alone knoweth how terrible is my life alone in this place with my servants, bound to a fierce, brutal man who loveth me not, and upon whose brow the Câfer hath set seal."

"Is thine husband neglectful, then?" I asked, noticing the poignant sorrow that in that moment seemed to have crushed her.

"Alas! yes. Whithersoever I go the bane of Sajin seemeth upon me," she sighed, passing her slim, bejewelled hand slowly across her white forehead. Tears welled in her brilliant eyes, as she added, in a broken voice:

"I am lost—lost to all, soulless, uncared for, unloved!"

She hesitated a moment thoughtfully, glancing at her own bejewelled hands and then at mine. With a quick movement she drew from one of her fingers a curious ring of silver, round which were Arabic characters in gold.

"See!" she cried, as if a sudden thought had occurred

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to her. "Take this and wear it. It is my talisman, and as long as it is upon thy finger no harm can befall thee. It beareth the stamp of 'La Belle,' and will preserve thee in health and guard thee in the hour of tribulation."

She took my hand in hers, and drawing my own signet ring from my finger, replaced it by her strange-looking talisman, afterwards slipping my own ring upon her hand.

A sob escaped her.

"We have exchanged rings!" she exclaimed brokenly, looking up into my face with tear-stained, world-weary eyes. Then, clutching her bare breast as if to still the throbbing of her heart, she cried: "When —when thou art far away thou wilt, peradventure, sometimes gaze upon mine, and remember that a service was once rendered thee by a poor, unhappy woman—thou wilt recollect that her name is Fathma Khadidja—that —that—ah; forgive me, or I am mad! mad!—that Fathma Khadidja *loveth thee!*"

Raising my hand to her warm, sensuous lips, she kissed it passionately with all the fire and ardour of the Child of the Sun. Then, releasing me, she tottered back, panting; and sank upon her silken divan, with her face buried in her hands, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"*Cama ta f ákal kathêlik tolâ ki*," I said, quoting at random from the Koran. "Come, come," I added, sympathetically, sinking down beside her, tenderly stroking her long, silky tresses. "Despair not. The One Worthy of Praise knowest how thou sufferest, and will give unto thee strength in the hour of thy need, and bring thee into the shadow of the great lote tree."

"Ah! Thy mouth uttereth pearls of wisdom," she cried. "But I have touched thee, an infidel, and am accursed by Allah. I care nought for the future, for already I am forsaken, already I have tasted of the bitter fruit of Al-Zakkum, and am doomed to the torture of Al-Hâwiyat, the place prepared for the evil-doers."

Then, raising her face to mine, with an intense look of passionate love, she said in a soft, sibilant whisper:

"Once only! Kiss me once! Then thou mayest go, and never shall we meet—never."

Her beautiful head fell upon my shoulder, and her hair—soft as spun silk—strayed across my face. For a moment her lips met mine in a hot, passionate kiss, a caress enough to make any man's head reel.

"I love thee," she whispered, in low, half-frightened tones, as she clung to me and would not allow me to release myself. "Unseen by thee I have watched thee many moons, and to-night I have brought thee thither to tell thee—to confess to thee my secret."

I tried to draw my lingering lips from hers, but with the fire of love gleaming in her brilliant eyes she gripped me with a force I should not have supposed her capable of. "Stay," she whispered. "Without thee the canker-worm of love eateth away mine heart."

* * * * *

Next day inspection duty took me to the Haras Fortress, away behind the hills of Ahmar, and the voices of the *muddenin* were already calling the faithful for the *maghrib* when I re-entered the Kasbah. Hassan, my man, was playing *damma* in the courtyard, but rose quietly, saluted, and told me that he had taken to my quarters a small package which had been left by the negro servant that had brought the letter on the previous day.

Could it, I wondered, be a present from Khadidja? Rushing in, I found on my table a small box packed in white paper and secured with black seals. Eagerly I tore away the wrappings and opened it.

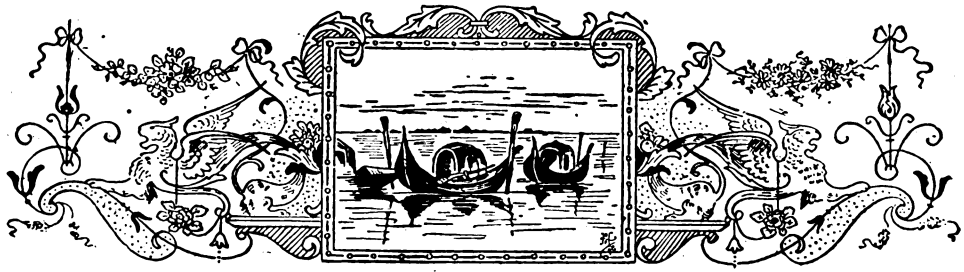
As I did so a shriek of horror escaped me. I fell back awe-stricken at the sight presented. Inside a satin-lined bracelet case, bearing the name of a Paris jeweller, on a piece of pale-blue velvet, there was stretched a human finger that had been roughly hacked off at the joint. It lay, stiff, white and cold, with the blood coagulated where the blunt knife had jagged the flesh. The finger was a woman's—slim, well-formed, with the nail stained by henna. It was loaded with costly rings, which scintillated in the golden ray of sunset that strayed into the room and fell across them, and as I looked, breathless in amazement, I saw among the ornaments my own signet ring.

A scrap of paper that fluttered to the ground bore the words, scrawled in Arabic character. "From the husband of Fathma Khadidja!"

That same night I was pacing the deck of the mail steamer bound for Marseilles, watching the glimmering lights of La Goulette fading at the stern. In fear and trepidation I took the hideous souvenir of unreciprocated love, and when unobserved, cast it far away from me into the dark rolling waters.

Perhaps there, deep in its lonely hiding place, it met the white, dead thing of which it once formed a part—the body of the matchless daughter of the sun whose wondrous hair enmeshed me, whose full, red lips of frailty held me like a magnet, shackling me to the inevitable, powerless and entranced. Who can tell?

ELSAC MARDEN.



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TOLD IN THE INDIAN BAZAAR.

By H. HUNTER.

In writing these stories, the purpose of the author is to give the average reader a fairly accurate notion of the sort o tales which are told daily and nightly in the bazaars and villages of India, on the Temple steps, and at the bathing stairs, and which are listened to with unquestioning faith by millions of people.

II.—THE APPLE FROM PARADISE.

NOT far from the holy city of Benarès, in the reign of the good King Shalmanazar, there lived a poor water-carrier and his wife.

Every morning from his twentieth year till now, when he was past sixty, Hurree Das, after performing his own ablutions in the Sacred River, had filled his skins from the Holy Stream and carried the precious fluid to those less fortunate individuals, who, unable themselves to bathe in the purifying current, were yet desirous when they left their earthly bodies behind them, of gaining for the new ones a comfortable seat in the Pillared Halls of Indra.

Those who had money paid Hurree Das for his services in coin; those who had none paid him in prayers.

It was "pay what you please" with Hurree. He never grumbled. Whatever people offered him he accepted without clamour or criticism. He never refused money, he never objected to prayers. Money was handy, certainly, but prayers were not to be despised. So Hurree went up and down the city and through the villages beyond the walls, crying "Ganges water! Ganges water!" refusing no man a share because he was poor, and cheerfully accepting as payment a prayer when his customer hadn't a *pice*.*

"Money," he would say, "is only for to-day; and man, who lives but one day at a time, has enough if he can buy grain for the present. But prayers are for to-morrow, and the profit of them will endure long, as the undying tree in Indra's Paradise shall continue to shower its blessings upon the happy souls who have found a shelter beneath its branches."

In the philosophy of Hurree Das, money was merely for current expenses, while prayer was treasure laid up against future contingencies. And like the wise son of a prudent father, Hurree did not disdain to insure himself against ill-fortune in the next world by investing with Bhugwán all the prayers he received in this. They were *hoondees*—drafts upon Heaven, possessing an actual value, and would be duly honoured as opportunity arrived. About this Hurree never had a doubt.

Now, a day came, when Hurree, grown old and feeble, was no longer able to go down to Holy Mother Gungá and fill his water-skins with water. When, indeed, his voice turning again to childish treble had become weak and worn, and quite unequal to crying "Ganges water," through the crowded bazaars and teeming alleys of the Temple City—when he could only sit at the door of his humble cottage and wonder why he had been born.

Senatbee, his wife, had that morning husked the last handful of rice in the grain-sack; there wasn't as much ghee* left in the jar as would cover the stone in a mango; and, of salt, no more than two pinches.

Hurree Das and his wife sat in the door of his grass-thatched dwelling in the cool of the day; and the woman said: "Surely, husband, it were better to trust ourselves to the quiet bosom of Mother Gunga, who will bear us peacefully into the Halls of Dazzling Light, than to sit with hands idle waiting for the grim messengers of Yama."

"Can you be sure, wife," answered the man, "that Vishnoo has no further need of us? Think you, he would allow us to continue to live if he had no more work for us to do?"

"Live!" cried the woman. "Call you this living? Dying is what I call it—dying by slow inches. Really, husband, I begin to suspect that you must have been a desperately wicked character in your previous existence, or this misery would not have been permitted to overtake you in the present."

As she spake the words there appeared before them as if springing from the ground a being, of human shape, truly, but of a grace and beauty to which poor humanity could never hope to aspire.

Darting at the woman a look which caused her to bite her tongue in remorse for having uttered her thoughts, the Celestial visitor advanced towards Hurree, who, transported with awe and wonder, had risen to receive him.

"Be not afraid, O water-carrier of the Ganges. I am a messenger sent by Brahma to tell thee that the prayers of the pious have prevailed. Heaven cannot remain in debt to a mortal. Behold this apple, which Brahma bids me leave with thee. It grew upon the first and greatest of all trees. The tree which stands in the centre of the garden of the gods, in Indra's Paradise; and gives to all who ask whatever thing they need. Behold the bloom of Heaven is still upon the fruit. It was plucked but this instant, and upon him who eats thereof it will confer the blessing of everlasting life. Take it, O man beloved of Brahma, and thy happiness shall be as thou understandest thy duty."

The next moment the messenger was gone, and Hurree Das found himself alone with his wife, and staring, open-eyed, at the apple in his hand.

Without thinking, he raised the fruit to his lips, exposing his toothless old jaws, and was just about to make a bite at the golden-hued produce of the Celestial tree, when Senatbee stopped him.

"And, pray, husband," said she, "what would be the good of everlasting life to a poor old useless fellow like you? Are you so much in love with misery that you would prolong it through the ages of eternity? Go to!

"You were a man, Hurree Das, when I married you; but methinks you are now little better than a fool. Everlasting life is a sorry boon to offer such as we.

* The smallest Indian coin.

* Clarified butter.

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Now, if he had told us to divide the apple, and promised us everlasting youth with powers of enjoyment continually renewed—delights that never wearied and pleasures that never palled—it would have been something like a tale. But to come all the way from Paradise to offer us what we'd rather be without——

"Well, to be plain, husband, I don't believe Brahma would have done it. Depend upon it, for all his soft speech and good looks, that messenger came from the other place."

"Wisdom is with thee, O wife!" exclaimed Hurree, looking doubtfully at the apple. "Thy words have turned my liver to water. Say, now, O wisest amongst women, what is thy word concerning it? In this matter I will be guided according as thou speakest. Protection of Heaven! It's a mercy I haven't bitten it."

And with that he threw the apple from him, as if it were a live coal that burnt his hand. But Senatbee, picking it up, rebuked him for his folly, bidding him not to waste anything which could be sold for money.

"How it may be in the next birth," said she, "we don't know; but in this, money buys everything, and nothing can be had without money."

"I really begin to believe you're right, wife," said the poor man. "Praise be to Heaven for giving me such a woman!"

Now when Senatbee perceived the effect which her words had upon her husband, she rejoiced and was satisfied. She had no notion of letting him eat the apple himself, and so deprive her of any share in whatever virtue it might possess. But now that she held possession of it, and he was willing to follow her instructions, she had another tale for him. Well, he would be ready to swallow that, too, and fifty more after it—now he had made over to her the confidence which he had lost in himself. Women always could twist men round their fingers, if they managed them rightly.

"Upon consideration, husband," said Senatbee, "I think it's just possible that Indra's apple may have been sent thee as a reward for pious services in the past. It would pain me very much to have to think that that fair-spoken stranger was no better than a servant of Safed, the great demon. And now I remember that he said, 'thy happiness would be as thou understoodest thy duty,' which confirms me in my opinion that he really was a messenger from Brahma, for the messages from the gods mostly do have those little tags tacked on to them."

"Wonderful woman!" cried Hurree Das. "Why did I never consult thee before?"

"Thy duty," continued Senatbee, "is plain. Make the best use of the gift the gods have provided. To eat it yourself would be selfish, foolish, and wicked. Nobody wants old men to live longer than they can decently find excuse for doing so. Now, money is always useful—to old and young alike. It is impossible to do without it here; and it would be no bad thing to have a little handy in case we should require it hereafter. One can never tell what may happen on that journey, and it might be awkward if we couldn't pay the toll. Therefore, husband, my counsel to thee is, take the apple to the palace, the King is old, but the Regent, Prince Ramatavi, is young; haply he will give much gold to possess this inestimable gift."

"Live for ever, O Prince!"

So, next day, Hurree went off to the palace, and standing before the Prince, told him all things concerning the wonderful fruit that he held in his hand.

"Live for ever, O Prince!" he cried, bowing his forehead to the dust, "and upon thy servant Hurree Das, bestow a little of the wealth which is in the coffers of the King."

Then, Prince Ramatavi, leading the water-carrier to the door of the Treasury, bade him enter and take as much gold as he desired.

But the poor man, having no pockets in his **dhótee*, was at a loss how to carry it. However, he filled his ears and his mouth and his nostrils with the precious metal; and went to his house—unsatisfied. When he had nothing, Hurree wanted nothing; now that he had more than sufficient, he was disposed to grumble.

Having got rid of the water-carrier, Prince Ramatavi rushed off in haste to his *zenana*—the apartment of his wives—and summoned Shurfan, his best-beloved.

* Waistcloth.

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"Light of my eyes!" he cried. "Joy of my heart! Eat this beautiful fruit, fresh from the tree in Indra's Paradise; eat, dear one, and live for ever—everlastingly young, everlasting lovely, everlastingly charming."

Now, as, from her first appearance on the scene, woman has ever been a creature of a strange perversity; always thinking lightly of what she possesses, and hankering after what is withheld; so the Princess, although she had for her husband the very best of good fellows, must needs lavish all the love of her idle soul upon Maha-pali, the Minister of War.

"Ah!" thought she, while she thanked her husband prettily for his handsome gift, "what a fine opportunity to convince that laggard, Maha-pali of the sincerity of my devotion," and, slipping into the Audience Chamber after her husband had departed, she sent for the minister, and with many demonstrations of tenderness and affection, presented him with the apple.

Maha-pali had no love to give the Princess in return for all she spent upon him; his heart was a prisoner to Lakha with the antelope eyes, one of the pretty Princess's maids of honour. And to Lakha, as soon as he met her he offered the apple as a token of his love.

Lakha, little minx, was delighted. She gave him kisses and good words, as many as he asked for, and having dismissed him with promises enough to fill a bullock-waggon, went off to seek an audience of the Prince.

"Now," said she, "I shall be sure to win his affection; and after we're properly married, see if I don't open his eyes about the Princess he's so very sweet on."

Prince Ramatavi accepted the apple, as if he had seen it then only for the first time; and bestowing upon Lakha a princely present, bade her return to her mistress and ask her to be ready to receive him in half an hour.

Now the Prince was not quite so ignorant of what went on at the court as pretty Lakha supposed; and the return to him of Indra's apple, confirmed all his worst suspicions. Disgusted with the world and loathing womankind, he determined to abandon the palace for the jungle, where at least he would be able to distinguish his friends from his foes. But first he would execute judgment on the wicked Princess. Entering straightway the apartments of the women, he caused Shurfan to be summoned before him.

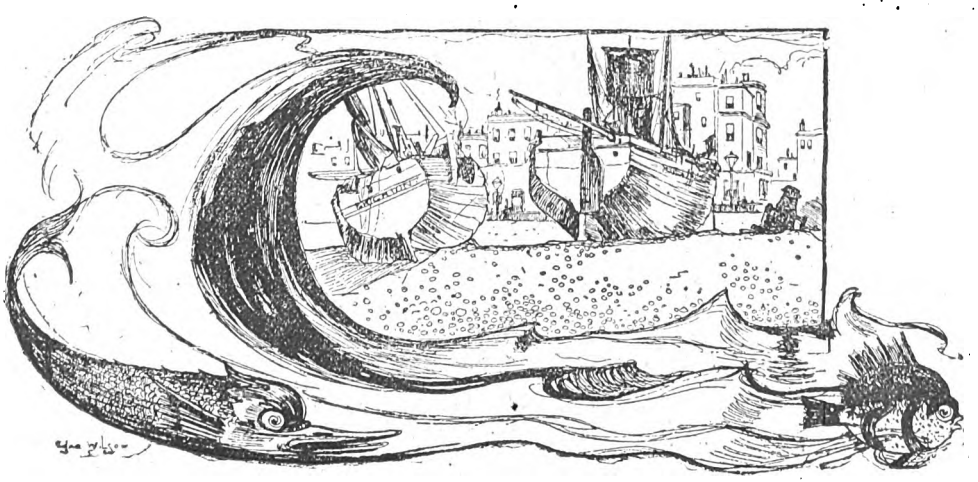
"What has become, Princess," he asked, "of the apple from Paradise which I gave unto thee?"

And the unabashed Shurfan, dissembling much, replied:

"I have obeyed the command of my lord and eaten it."

Then Prince Ramatavi, producing the fruit, gave orders for her instant beheading; and having first washed the apple carefully in Ganges water, ate it himself.

From that hour the Prince disappeared from the palace; but a Jogi who, men say, was the Prince, lives in the jungles of Oudh even to this day, death having no power over him.



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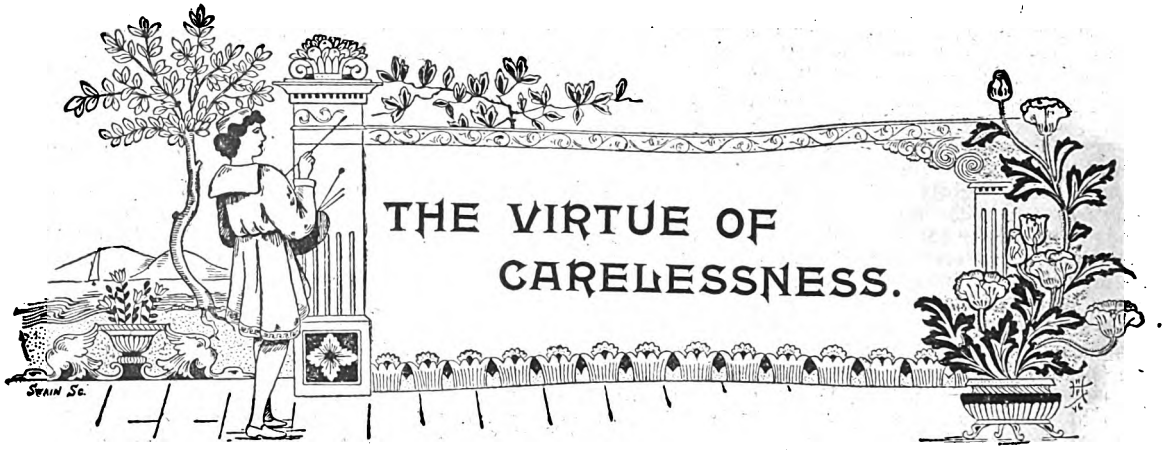

IF my wife has a failing, it is lack of reverence. She doesn't recognise those property rights which should inhere to the personal belongings of a husband. I heard that expression uttered by a fellow with a chronic distaste for work, whose wife supported him by dress-making. I didn't tell Minnie where I got the expression when I quoted it to her, but she immediately said:

"That sounds like Bill Sinks."

Then she laughed. My wife has a very musical laugh.

I think that I was mildly reprimanding her at the time for mislaying the gimlet. I'm the most particular fellow you ever saw about keeping everything in its place. When I want a tool of any kind, I want to know just where to lay my hands on it. It's a kind of religion with me, and it hurts me terribly to find things in confusion. That's where my wife's lack of reverence comes in. She has no respect for the eleventh commandment: "Order is Heaven's first law."

Well, now that you understand my wife's failing—I'll admit it's her greatest one—I'll go on with the story with which it is connected.

One day last July, Jim Outhwick came into the station just as I was closing up to go to supper. Jim was the paymaster at the Vulcan mills, and a right good fellow.

"Hello, Joe," he said. "All alone?"

"Yes," I said. "What's up?"

He flung his canvas bag on the table and said:

"I must go down the road to-night to Ashbury. There's talk of a strike among the miners, and I've got to be there first thing in the morning. I'm to offer to pay off the disaffected ones and make a big show of money. That's a bluff that generally tells. The men'll make up their minds the company can't be intimidated, and they'll get into harness again. There's £5,000 in that bag, Joe."

I glanced at the bag on the table and looked back at Jim.

"What did you bring it here for?" I asked.

"That's easily explained," he answered, sitting down. "I got the word to start for Ashbury just half an hour ago. The money was up in a hurry and I didn't have time to go home. I couldn't very well stay at the mill and I wouldn't go to the tavern. So I just thought I'd come down here and get you to stay with me until the night goods train comes along. She's due at 9.30, isn't she?"

"9.35," I answered. "But I'm just off to supper."

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "I feel safe enough here. I'm armed to the teeth, you know, and there wouldn't be any danger until after dark. But you'll come back and keep me company, won't you?"

"I will if Minnie lets me off," I said. "I'm booked for a game of cribbage with her after supper."

There was a stout old safe in the corner of the office that had nothing in it but blank way-bills and reports. I unlocked it and tossed the canvas bag inside.

"There," I said, as I thrust my bunch of keys in my coat pocket, "that makes it a little safer."

I thought Jim looked a bit dubious over this precaution, but he laughed and said:

"All right, my boy; I'll make myself comfortable until you come back."

Minnie didn't like the idea of my going, but I told her Jim counted on me. I didn't say a word about the money, however; I knew it would worry her, and to tell the truth, it worried me a little. I was sorry Jim had brought it there, and I didn't like his talk about precautions.

Well, after supper I went out to see if the dog was all right—I've got the finest mastiff in all Lancashire—and when I came back Minnie called to me from the sitting-room:

"Just a minute, Joe. I'm writing a note for Hattie."

Hattie is the wife of a telegraph clerk, and I knew that Minnie wanted me to leave it at the station, where he could get it in the morning. It was quite a number of minutes, however, before she came out with the note and my coat. It was so warm I had left it off before supper.

"Hadn't you better let the dog go with you, Joe?" she asked, as she helped me with my coat.

"No, no," I said, laughing. "He'll stay at home and take care of you. I'll put the lamp in the window, though, so you'll know I'm all right."

"Mind," she said, "I'll watch for it, and if it isn't there, I'll come down after you."

I'm stationmaster at Y——. Our line is what's called the old line, and traffic on it is mostly light goods. At night the station is deserted, there being no business for telegraph clerk or booking clerk.

I found Jim with his heels on the desk puffing away at a good cigar.

"Not an alarm," he said, in his joking way; "not even a mouse."

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We chatted away for an hour or more, when Jim suddenly put down his feet and yawned heavily.

"Joe," he said, "if you don't mind I'll go out and take a little stroll."

"Go," I said; "but mind you're not gone long."

I went back and sat down. The more I thought about the money the more I didn't like the idea. What business had Jim to go away and leave all the responsibility with me? Of course he didn't leave it all with me, but he left altogether too big a share.

As I sat there grumbling, a low tap on the window overlooking the platform attracted my attention. I looked up. That side of the building was in the shadow, but I could see a man's face against the pane.

"Joe," said someone outside.

I supposed it might be one of the permanent way hands and stepped across the room.

"What is it?" I called.

"Open the window, Joe," said the voice.

I pushed it up a little way.

"Is that you, Jerry?" I called.

There was no response. I put my head through the opening and looked up and down the line. Nobody was in sight. Just then I heard a slight noise behind me. I drew in my head. Something seemed to crash into my brain. A flash of blazing light blinded me. Then all was dark.

When I came to I was tied in my chair, my head was sore and wet, and two men with stripes of black cloth across their faces were looking down at me.

"He's all right," said the shorter one.

The tall man nodded.

"Get the keys," he said in a queer, hoarse voice.

The shorter man felt in my pockets.

"Not here," he cried.

"They must be," said the tall man, in his hoarse voice.

"I tell you they are not. Bring the lamp."

The tall man took the lamp from the window ledge and came closer to me. But the search was in vain. The tall man placed the lamp on the table, while the short man put a revolver to my ear.

"Come," he said, "where are those keys?"

My head was beginning to clear a little. I saw it all. My wife had taken the keys from my pocket because it was her way, and because she thought I had no further use for them until the morning.

"He must have left the keys at home," said the tall man hurriedly. "Here, give him a sheet of paper and let him write a note to his wife asking for them."

The short man looked up sharply.

"I'll get them," said the tall man.

They pulled the table up to me and spread out a scrap of paper. The short man loosened the rope and let my right hand go free. I reached to my vest pocket half blindly and drew out my pencil, still in a daze. I tried to put my wife's name on the sheet. The pencil refused to make a mark. I looked at it. It was dull and horribly haggled about the point. I pride myself on the fine point I put to my pencils.

Again I comprehended that my wife had borrowed that very pencil to write the note to the operator's wife. I tried to scribble with the blunted thing.

"Confound you, hurry!" growled the short ruffian.

I showed the pencil point. With an exclamation of anger the short man drew out a heavy handled knife and swiftly sharpened the pencil. As he passed it back my wandering vision was caught by the lamp on the table. Heavens! it was no longer in the window! As this thought struck me, I looked towards the ledge and saw there a white, scared face pressed against the pane. It was my wife.

"Write!" growled the ruffian.

My only thought was to gain time. I knew my wife was there. I knew she would bring help.

I took the pencil in my nervous fingers. As I did so a low growl caught my ear. It caught the ears of the villains too. The short man dropped his knife on the table and turned towards the door with his revolver extended.

The tall man drew himself up against the wall.

"It's the dog," he hoarsely whispered.

"Don't miss it, Jack."

I saw the door tremble a little, I saw the short villain's arms rise and my fingers closed on the handle of the knife he had just dropped. Then, as the door slowly opened, I drew back my arm and thrust wildly at the man in front of me.

Something yellow flew through the doorway. There was a wild scream, a heavy fall, and I lapsed into unconsciousness again.

When I came round I was in bed at home, with Minnie bending over me.

"It's all right, Joe," she murmured. "They've got them both locked up safe and sound, and the money is all right, and the mill directors have given you £200 of it."

"And Jim?" I asked.

"Jim!" she cried. "Why, Jim was the tall man. It was all his plot to steal the money and throw the blame on you. And if I hadn't taken your keys—don't scold—they'd have had the money, and if it hadn't been for the lead pencil I dulled—the man you stabbed told the whole story—I wouldn't have got there in time with Hector. The dog almost killed Jim before I could call him away, but I'm not so sorry, because the little man says they would have killed you if you had by any chance suspected Jim's identity."

I reached out and took Minnie's hand.

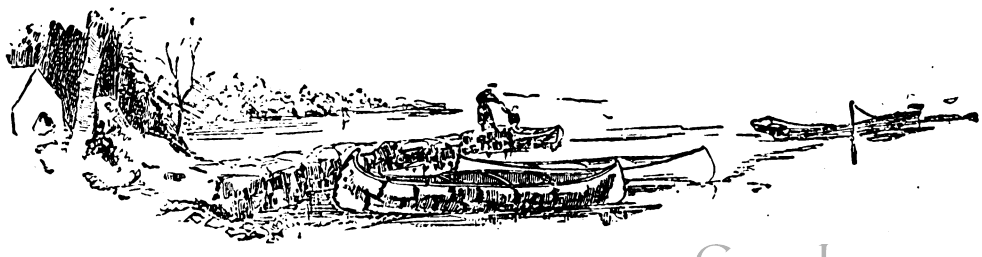
"That £200 belongs to you, dear," I said brokenly.

"Well," she answered, "if you take it, Joe, you may rest assured I'll borrow it sooner or later."

Then she put her cheek against my hand and laughed.

Then she cried.

B. M. G.



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THE FATE OF CARL BLUVEN.

A Legend of the Maelstrom.

ON that wild part of the coast of Norway that stretches between Bergen and Stravanger there once lived a fisherman called Carl Bluven.

Carl was one of the poorest of all the fishermen that dwelt on that shore.

Notwithstanding his poverty, Carl was on the eve of marriage. His bride was the daughter of a woodcutter in the neighbouring forest, so that the match was pretty equal on both sides.

He dared not launch his leaky boat in such a sea, and yet, if he caught no fish, there would be nothing for supper when he should bring his wife home.

Carl walked out upon the shore and wandered along, uncertain what to do.

He at length sat down upon a shelving rock and looked out upon the sea towards the great whirlpool called the Maelstrom, of which so many fearful things were recorded.

"What riches are buried there," said Carl to himself half aloud. "What casks of butter and hams—to say nothing of gold and silver—and here am I, Carl Bluven, to be married to-morrow, and not a keg for the minister. If I had but one cask from the bottom of the Maelstrom, I would——"

But Carl did not finish the sentence. Like all the fishermen of that coast, Carl had his superstitions and his beliefs, and he looked round him rather uneasily, for he well knew that all in the Maelstrom belonged to Kahlbrannar, the tall old mariner of the whirlpool.

He was just about to return to his solitary hut, when a high crested wave, rushing through the channel beside him, bore a cask along with it and threw it among the great stones that lay between the rocks.

It proved to be the very thing he wanted—a cask of as fine butter as ever came out of Bergen and as fresh as if it had been churned a week ago.

Next morning betimes Carl Bluven was on his way to his wedding, rolling the cask before him, with the larger half of the butter in it for his marriage fee.

For some little time all went well with Carl. What with the provisions he had brought home and the remains of his butter, the newly married couple did not fare amiss, even although the fisherman rarely drew a net.

At length, however, the sausage pots stood empty, and even the Gammel Orsk cheese was reduced to a shell. As for the butter, Carl and his wife had found it so good that the cask had been empty long since.

Carl left his hut, taking his net and his oars over his shoulders, leaving Ulderwalla picking cloudberries, and, unmooring his boat, paddled out of the creek and began throwing his nets. But not a fish could he take. The sun set, and dusk began to creep over the shore. The tide had retired, so that Carl's boat was left dry a long way within water-mark, and he had to walk a dreary mile or more among the black dripping rocks that lay between him and his own dwelling.

As Carl turned away he noticed at a little distance close to the water a small boat that well he knew belonged to no fisherman of that coast. It was the very smallest boat he had ever seen, such as no seaman of Bergenhuus could keep afloat on such a sea, and the build of it, too, was the queerest he had ever beheld.

Raising his eyes from the pools of water, in which he hoped to find some floundering fish, he observed a tall figure advancing from the shore in the direction of the little boat he had seen and nearly in the same line which he was pursuing.

"A dreary night this, Carl Bluven," said the strange mariner, "and likely for a storm."

"I hope not," said Carl, not a little surprised that he should be addressed by his name.

"You hope not," said the other, with an ugly sneer. "And who, I wonder, likes better than Carl Bluven to roll a castaway cask to his cabin door?"

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"Why," returned Carl apologetically, "what Providence kindly sends 'tis not for a poor fisherman to refuse."

"You liked the butter I sent you, then?" said the strange mariner.

"You sent me?" said Carl.

But Carl's rejoiner remained without further explanation.

"Aha!" said the tall mariner, pointing out to sea in the direction of the Maelstrom. "She bears right upon it—the *Frou of Drontheim*, deeply laden! We'll meet again, Carl Bluven." And without further parley the tall, strange mariner brushed past Carl and strode hastily toward the sea.

As Carl walked toward his own house he felt almost certain that the tall mariner he had encountered was no other than Kahlbrannar. He reached the water-mark opposite to his own house, and at the same time his foot struck against a cask lying high and dry on the very spot where the other had drifted.

Carl guessed where it came from, and, rolling the cask to his own door, he was soon busy staving it and drawing out, one after another, some of the choicest white puddings and dried hams that ever left the harbour of Bergen.

Carl Bluven had a singular dream that night. He thought that he saw the little boat he had noticed that evening lying beyond the rocks at low tide, and that he walked out to examine it, and, being curious to know whether he could steer so very small a boat, he stepped into it, and, leaning forward, hoisted the little sail at the bow, the only one it had, and when he turned round to take the helm he saw the tall mariner sitting as steersman.

Not a word was spoken, till after a little while the steersman, pointing forward, said:

"There she is, as I told you, the *Frou of Drontheim*, bearing right upon the Maelstrom, as my name is Kahlbrannar; she'll be down to the bottom before us."

Carl now looked out ahead and saw a fearful sight; the sea, a league across, was like a boiling cauldron, whirling round and round, and gradually, as it were, shelving down to the centre, where there appeared a huge hole, round which the water wheeled with an awful swirl.

A gallant three-masted ship was within the whirlpool; she no longer answered the helm, but flew round and round the cauldron, gradually nearing the centre, which she soon reached, and stern foremost, rushed down the gulf that swallowed her up.

The little boat, piloted by the tall mariner, flew directly across the whirlpool to its centre, and the next moment Carl found himself walking with his companion on the ribbed sea sand at the bottom of the Maelstrom.

What a sight met the eyes of Carl! Mountains of wealth, wrecks of a thousand vessels, and the white bones of mariners, thicker strewn than gravestones in a churchyard. But what mainly attracted the eyes of Carl was the gold and silver that lay about, as plentiful as pebble stones.

"Now," said Kahlbrannar, after Carl had feasted his eyes awhile upon all he saw, "what would you give, Carl Bluven, to be master of all this?"

"Faith," said Carl, "I am but a poor fisherman; you ask me what I would give for all I see here, and you know I have nothing to give."

"There you're wrong again," said Kahlbrannar. "Sit down upon that chest of gold, friend, and listen. You shall be the richest butter merchant and ham merchant and spirit merchant in all Bergenhuus, and have more gold and silver in your coffers than King Christian has in his treasure, and in return you shall marry your daughter to my son."

Carl, having no daughter and not knowing whether he might ever have one, and half thinking the offer a jest, said, "A bargain be it, then."

It was the morning after this that Carl, awakening just at daybreak, sprang out of bed, and, telling Uldewalla that he was going to draw a net that morning, left his hut and walked toward the rocks.

Uldewalla, feeling uneasy in her mind, rose and looked through the small window and saw her husband in the grey of the morning walk out among the black rocks (for the tide was back), and she could see him standing close to the low water line, and another of taller stature standing by him.

Carl, however, was not long absent. A terrific storm soon after arose, and in the midst of it he arrived, rolling a huge cask up to the door.

Next day Carl told her he was discontented with his manner of living—that he was resolved to be a rich man, and that the very next morning they should depart for Bergen.

Next morning saw Carl and Uldewalla on their way to Bergen. Uldewalla proposed that they should take their provisions with them and such little articles as they possessed, but Carl said there was no occasion for such strict economy, as he had a well-stored warehouse and everything comfortable at Bergen.

Carl led Uldewalla to a good house, facing the harbour where, as he had said, everything was prepared for their reception. A neighbour who had lived hard by brought the key, telling them that a good fire was lighted, for a tall gentleman, who engaged the house, had ordered everything to be got ready that evening, and adding:

"The quantity of the goods brought into the warehouse this day is the wonder of all Bergen. They've been carried in as fast as boats could land them, and the boatmen, they say, were all as like to each other as one cask they carried was to another."

Never indeed was warehouse better stored than Carl Bluven's. He was soon looked upon as the most prosperous merchant and the most moneyed man in Bergenhuus.

It is true indeed that Carl had detractors. Some wondered where he came from, and others where he got his money. All his payments were made in old coin, or strange coin, and not in the current money of the country. But prosperity always raises up enemies, and Carl's gold was good gold and none the worse for its age.

To Uldewalla all this was a mighty agreeable change, and in good time Uldewalla became the mother of a girl so beautiful that she was the admiration of her parents and the wonder of all Bergen.

For the first fifteen years after Carintha was born Carl was not only a thriving, but a right merry merchant. His dealings grew more and more extensive, and in respect of wealth he distanced all competition.

But as Carintha grew up Carl grew less merry, and when she had passed her sixteenth summer, and when Uldewalla spoke to her husband about settling Carintha in the world, anyone, to have looked in Carl's face at that time, would have seen that something extraordinary was passing within.

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It was about a year after this that the son of the governor of Bergenhuus, Hamel von Storgelven, cast his eyes upon Carintha and became enamoured of her. She on her part did not rebuke his advances, except with that maidenly timidity that is becoming, and all Bergen said there would be a wedding.

Carl began to treat all that had once passed as an old story, and, seeing his moneybags about him and his warehouses full of goods, there was nothing to remind him of his hut on the sea-coast and what had happened there, and nothing but what might well breed confidence in any man.

It was a fine, sunshiny day—the day, as has been said, before the celebration of Carintha's nuptials—and Carl Bluven was standing on the quay with the other merchants, looking at the cheerful sight of the ships passing in and out and the bales of goods landing, and chatting about city matters and trade, when suddenly all eyes were directed toward the harbour. Carl's eyes followed the rest, and, sure enough, he saw something that might well create wonder in others and something more in him.

"Where does it come from?" said one.

"What a singular build!" said another.

"Never was such a boat seen in Bergen harbour," said a third.

"And look at the helmsman," said a fourth. "He's taller than the mast."

As for Carl, he said nothing, but remained standing with the group of merchants. Meanwhile the boat touched the landing place, and the tall mariner stepped out, and with a singular sneer on his face walked directly up to Carl Bluven, who had not fallen back like the rest, but manfully stood his ground, and was, therefore, a little apart from his companions.

No one could distinctly hear what passed between the tall, strange, old mariner and the chief magistrate. It was evident, however, that angry words passed between the two. The mariner, darting a menacing scowl at his companion, turned away and descended into his boat, which he paddled out of the harbour, while everyone looked after it and asked of his neighbour the same question as before:

"Where does it come from?"

"I served him right," said the chief magistrate as he walked homeward. "Fulfil my bargain indeed! No, no! If he was such a simpleton as to fill my warehouse with goods, and my coffers with cash upon a mere promise, I'm not such a fool as to keep it. Let me but keep on dry land and I may snap my fingers at him, and, by the ghost of King Kyree, if I catch him again on the quay of Bergen I'll clap him in the city gaol!"

He now knew the worst. His promise could not bind Carintha in any way, who would be secure even against treachery so soon as the wedding ring was placed upon her finger.

For more than twenty years after the marriage of Carintha, Carl Bluven continued to enjoy his prosperity and to exercise at due intervals the office of chief magistrate, and he saw his grand-children grow about him, and at length buried his wife Uldewalla. But the penalty of the rash promise had yet to be paid.

It chanced that Carl Bluven—who, by-the-by, was now Carl von Bluven, having long ago received that dignity—was bidden to a feast at the house of a rich citizen who lived just on the opposite side of the harbour.

Although it was nearly half a league round the head of the harbour and across the drawbridge, Carl walked round rather than trust himself across in a boat, a conveyance which, ever since his interview on the quay, he had studiously avoided.

In the midst of their conviviality, and when it nearly approached midnight, the merriment was suddenly interrupted by the hollow beat of the alarm drum, and all hastily arising, and running to the window, which looked out upon the harbour, Carl saw that his own warehouse was in flames.

It was, as has been said, half a league round by the drawbridge; the merchant saw his well-stored warehouse within a stone's throw of him, burning away—the fumes of wine were in his head—and without further thought he leapt into a boat that lay just below and pushed across.

Scarcely had Carl von Bluven done this when he recollected his danger. Paddle as he would, the boat made no way.

Some seamen awoke at the loud cries for help, and some, who jumped out of their hammocks, told how they saw a boat drifting out of the harbour.

Two or three days after this event the *Tellemarke*, free trader, arrived in Bergen from Iceland and reported that but for a strong northerly breeze she would have been sucked into the Maelstrom; that a little before sunset when within two leagues of the whirlpool, a small boat was seen drifting empty, and that soon after another, the smallest and strangest built boat that ever was seen, passed close under their bows, to windward, paddling in the direction of the Maelstrom; that two mariners were in it, he at the helm of an exceedingly tall stature and singular countenance; that the other cried out for help, upon which the ship lay to and manned a boat with four rowers, but that with all their exertions they were unable to gain upon the little boat, which was worked by a single paddle, and that the boatmen, fearing they might be drawn into the whirlpool, returned to the ship, and that, just at sunset, they could descry the small boat, by the help of their glasses, steering right across the Maelstrom as if it had been a small pond.

H. RIVIERS.

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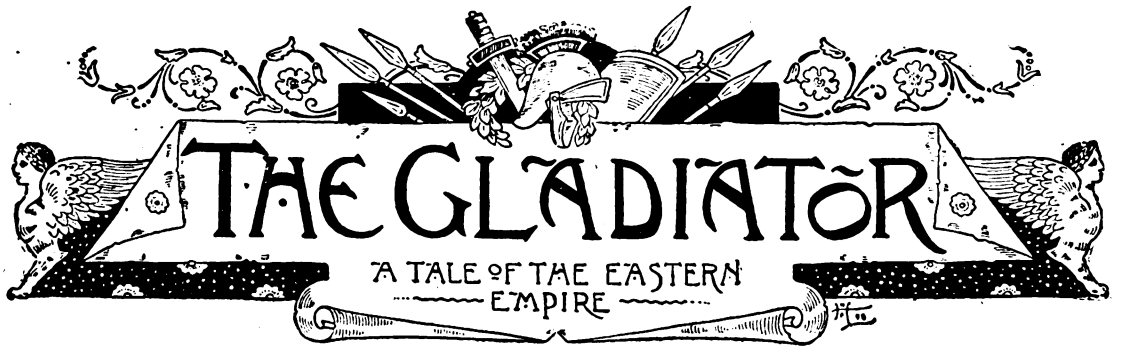

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE FIRST.

"THE AMBITIONS OF YOUTH."

CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE MAID.

ACROSS the famous passage of the Bosphorus, through the lightening shades of the sunrise, out of the darkness into the dawn, a ship came slowly, impelled by the lazy breeze. Many days had the vessel laboured in the Adriatic Sea amongst the islands; and the captain, when her prow cut the waters of the Golden Horn and the glittering buildings of the first Christian City in the world uprose on every hand, heaved a sigh of relief. And Rhesus, who saw the splendour of Constantinople for the first time in his life as they stood into that palace-fringed arm of the sea, where the fleets of fifty nations could have lain at anchor, felt the young blood of hope leap within him.

"My father shall see that I am worthy of his name!" he cried to his friend Proclus, as they stepped ashore. "I shall make myself famous here, and he shall hear of my success in his Sicilian home, and own that he did ill to cast me adrift on the world!"

"And what do you call success?" asked Proclus, in his quiet way.

"Fame, wealth, power, the love of beautiful women and the praise of honest men."

"So," said Proclus, "none of them are things worth striving for, friend Rhesus, saving the second, and perhaps the fourth. As for the praise of honest men—that will be lacking for a certainty. Honest men are not to be found in this age; least of all in this city of corruption."

Proclus was a cynic of cynics. Born and nurtured in the polluted atmosphere of the Byzantine Court, and yet being honest and disdainful of ill-gained success himself, he sought refuge in a pessimism that sat well upon him. Rhesus was from distant Sicily, unsophisticated, full of the fire of youth and ambition, and enthusiastic in the faith of the good old gods who ever favoured the strong arm and the stern will, and his cousin's satire jarred upon him.

"Surely we shall find some brave and true men," he said with fine scorn; "surely some who will die for their country, for their faith, for their love?"

Proclus was but a few years older than the other, who was now twenty, was not an inch taller, and had less of a manly bearing, but he stood and smiled at his friend in the busy street as a teacher might at a backward scholar.

"I' faith!" he cried, "you are soft with the blush of youth yet, after all I have taught you on the voyage! I tell you the age is corrupt to the core. The old faith which we two yet hold is fast dying, and can never be revived; the new faith is honeycombed with rottenness already, from its mitred bishops in their palaces down to its credulous mobs that howl and jeer at every Pagan who passes on the street. The Emperor is but a tool in the hands of unscrupulous ministers, and these enrich themselves from the public wealth. *Miserie, miserie!*—as these Latin-canting Christians say—there is no good in the world. The only thing worth living for is an ample dinner."

Rhesus did not reply. He was busy thinking, resolving, planning. He rebelled against his friend's picture, and determined to prove in himself that all men were not liars, hypocrites, traitors, thieves. And, he also reflected, was it not his secret hope, his cherished ambition, to raise aloft once more the fallen banner of the olden faith—the sturdy Paganism of his Roman ancestors, who in their day had made Rome great—above the sign of the Cross? He would show the world what a Roman and a Pagan could do!

"Well, if you have done day-dreaming, friend," broke in the voice of Proclus upon his reflections, "we will be bestirring ourselves a little better. See, we have left the Convent of St. Conan behind, and in the square yonder is the famous church of St. Sophia; there is the imperial palace; and there, over the house-tops, you can see the walls of the Hippodrome."

"Lead on!" replied Rhesus. "I would fain see the horses I am to drive, if, as you say, you can get me entered for the races of the nones of June. But I wish your green sash was not quite so glaring, Proclus; the citizens in blue seem not so pleased with it."

"I will do all I promised you, Rhesus, when you embarked with me. I have great influence with the keeper of the beasts to our faction in the Hippodrome, and my gold has greater influence still. Besides, your figure and bearing will commend you favourably. Forsooth!—old Sibron would rave like one possessed if he missed the chance of your services, having once seen you! As for the sour looks of our enemies, the blues, confusion take them. . . . Pallas Athene! but that was nearer than to my liking! out with your steel, youngster, as you value your neck, and follow me!"

It all happened so quickly that Rhesus scarcely knew how it was done, but he found himself at his friend's side defending the end of a long, narrow street against a shouting, furious mob of blue-garmented fanatics, whose knives gleamed in the sunlight before him. A dagger, thrown by a skilful hand, flashed before his companion's face, missing him only because he saw it coming and held back, and the two had now turned at bay, raising the rallying cry of "*Nika!*" as they fought. Friends with tokens of green cut their way to them through the blue throng; others ran to their aid from the rear; cries and oaths, laughter and jeers, arose on every hand; they were engaged in a faction fight and would do well to escape with whole skins.

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Pictures from "THE GLADIATOR,"

A dagger flashed before his companion's face.

His foe l

START READING TO-DAY.

"I hate you, you great ugly men!"

A Tale of the Eastern Emp

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Our Grand New Serial Story.

apt upon him.

They thundered on the wooden door of the portal with their sword hilts.

START READING TO-DAY.

"There is a plot brewing."

Empire, By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

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Something of the insensate enmity and partisanship of the rival factions of blue and green, born in the arenas and nursed for their own purposes by the emperors and the gladiators, had reached to all parts of the decaying empire. Even in distant Sicily the youths had worn the colours in the games, and partly because his father had favoured the green and partly because the blues were the favourites of Court and Church, Rhesus had adopted the first. Yet it was only an emblem to him. It seemed so unworthy of men to come to blows—to blood—over the paltry significance of a badge blue or green, held by most for no better reason than a whim, a fashion, or a folly. But as he strove there by the side of Proclus, the swords of a dozen friends glinting round, he had no choice but to fight as desperately as the rest.

It was a moment or two of frenzy, and then it was over. Knives flashed, swords sang, arrows flew, and more than one blue champion went down before the swinging strokes of the blade his young arms wielded, and then the riot ceased as suddenly as it began. The assailants and assailed melted away before the sweeping charge of the Heruli cavalry, and the friends, running low like foxes, escaped by sundry dark passages that Proclus knew well to the gates of the theatre. They thundered on the wooden door of the portal with their sword hilts, and the servitor, recognising Proclus, let them pass in, making no comment on their red-stained garments.

"Gods! If this comes of wearing the green, I think I shall lay the sash aside," said Rhesus. "Has it come to this, that one cannot walk in the streets of the capital without being called upon to fight for one's life at any time? Methinks it is a wonder that the gods send not an earthquake to swallow up this city, as they destroyed Antioch but a year ago."

"Oh, 'tis nothing!" answered Proclus lightly, wiping his heated face. "I have seen many worse encounters than this, and the cavalry have not often been so early on the scene. We have done well, my Rhesus—and you laid about you lustily. I am more convinced than ever that you are the man I want for this race. But here comes old Sibron himself; he shall decide."

A wiry, sinister-looking, ferret-eyed fellow, his face wrinkled with the craftiness of many years, came towards them from the cage room.

"Back so soon, my worthy cynic?" he croaked in his harsh voice. "Have you brought us a new recruit?—we need one desperately enough, Heaven knows!"

Whereupon Proclus drew forward his friend and retailed his circumstances and his merits as glibly as a dealer bartering slaves; discussing his good points, his muscles, his stature, his enthusiasm, with a wondrous disregard for his feelings, and the end of the confab was that Rhesus was engaged to drive the second chariot of the four that the green faction had matched against an equal number of the blues for the honours of a day of sport. Much hung on the issue of the race, they told him, for the Emperor, although prejudiced in favour of the blue faction by the hatred of the fair Theodora, was inclined to praise success of every sort. In the gladiatorial fights, said the greens, victory would be theirs beyond doubt, so that the chariot race alone would turn the balance.

So, with all youth's thoughtlessness, Rhesus entered with spirit into the cause of the green factions, and the keeper of the beasts was so pleased thereat that he would have no nay but the novice must straightway lead out the steeds and run them round the sanded course.

Nothing averse, Rhesus sprang into one of the idle cars, while Proclus geared in the mettled horses, and shaking the rein with a practised hand, he shot away on the wings of the wind, a swirling dust cloud following in his wake. Once, twice, amid the admiring cries of the dawdling youths of both factions who stood about, he thundered round the arena, and a third time passed old Sibron like a flash. Halfway round, a little girl ran out from the side, clapping her hands in childish glee, and seemingly heedless of danger, stood almost in the way. The off horse swerved slightly, seeing the little figure, and reared, a trace broke, and the two animals shot forward, but not so quickly that Rhesus had not time, in the brief pause, to stretch out a hand to the laughing little maid and lift her into the car beside him. She clung to him confidingly as they went madly round, and when he pulled up and dismounted, still held fast to his hand.

"A sturdy jade for a young one!" laughed Proclus, patting her golden head, "you are indeed a lucky fellow, Rhesus, to have found a love so soon after landing. Who is she, Sibron?"

"She is who she is, most worthy patron," answered the keeper, with an evil twinkle in his eyes. "Her mother, whom she is named after, was Eutasia, and died over her. That is all we know. The little one came here by chance just after you left on your voyage, and none of us have had the heart to turn her away. Sometimes she will go home with me, sometimes with Marcen; cares for none of us, saving to plague our lives, and seems to have no sense of fear."

"She will grow up like the rest, I suppose," said Proclus, turning away wearily, "and either end her days in the galleys or on the throne. I vow the puissant Theodora herself was just such another dare-devil, only that her father was responsible for *her* upbringing. Well, 'tis the way of the world. And if you are tired of showing off your prowess, Rhesus, and conquering fair damsels with the display, we will be going home. After the ship and the fight I am tired and hungry, and we must get over both, if I am to show you the sights of the city by night. Kiss the little one and come away."

Rhesus bent down to caress the sweet little face held up to him, and as she threw her little arms round his neck with all a child's abandon, old Sibron and the others broke into a rough burst of laughter at the sight. She pulled herself away at that with a finely tragic gesture, stamping her tiny foot on the ground like a veritable fury, and cried angrily:

"Oh, I hate you, you great, ugly men! You are always making fun of me! I like this stranger better than any of you. He is gentle and good, and will not tease me, I know. I hope he will come here again. I wish he would take me away!"

And she stamped her little foot again with a passion that was most amusing. Then she looked up at Rhesus, and he bent and kissed her once more, and came away.

"I am beginning to prove your black picture of the world false, friend Proclus," he said, as they merged with the pressing throng in the streets. "I have already found some good in this city; something with a promise of all that is best in life; something worth loving and living and dying for."

"By my soul! Have you fallen in love so soon?" cried the other mockingly. "And with a waif of the circus, to boot?"

"I think I have," answered Rhesus seriously. "I think that little Eutasia has the making of a good and beautiful woman in her, and it will not be my fault if she is not kept from the harm that lurks round her future life. Might I not do worse? And if I am in love with her so soon and so seriously, what then?"

Proclus did not reply, but led on, an enigmatical expression on his face. And as they went, though all the sights, the dresses, the various nationalities that mixed in the streets, the great buildings and costly shrines, were new to his eyes, Rhesus heeded them not. The rough laugh and light words of Sibron rang jarring in his ears, and all the faces that he saw merged into one face, that danced before him with childish merriment and admiration shining from the bright blue eyes, and the sunlight filtering through the wind-tossed tangle of the sunny hair.

It was the face of little Eutasia, the merry little waif of the Hippodrome. And how often, in dark days and bright, on land and sea, lustrous with love or clouded with sorrow, did he see that fairy face in the after years!

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CHAPTER II.

The Chariot Race.

Gaily passed the month of waiting before the nones of June came, and the two friends well filled the interval with training and merry-making, and adventures of the wildest kind. Rhesus glided easily into the restless life of the city; it was like a draught of the fine old vintage of the Campania to his provincial mind; and ere the day of the festival dawned he knew most of the forbidden haunts of the capital, most of its streets and secret passages, many of its public characters, a little of its pompous Court. He was even presented to the Emperor Justinian—for Proclus was judicious in the bestowal of his liberal bribes—and in spite of the green badge that he wore, received an assurance that he would be watched with interest in the arena.

As for the enmity between the factions, Rhesus cared little for it, being young and on the threshold of a fresh career. He went with the stream of life, and, cast by circumstance into one of the rival eddies of it, remained there. He got entangled in more than one hot broil in the streets, but fortune favoured him each time, and his skill of prowess, both with the sword and the chariot, made him the talk of the city. Solitary wearers of the blue gave him wide road-room, and the cry of "Rhesus the Roman!" became a well-known rallying cry for his own partisans.

And that there was need for unity amongst them is not to be wondered at, for perhaps never, in the whole long history of Rome's deplorable decline, was the bitterness of the factions so intense as in the five or six years before that short but terrible Reign of Terror which shook the Eastern Empire to its foundations.

The factions were better in their infancy, when there were four instead of two, and their rivalry was merely good-humoured competition in the games: when the *whites* swore by the snows of winter; the *blues* by the sky and sea and the mists of autumn; the *greens* by the verdure of spring; the *reds* by the sun and the dog-star of summer.

But at this time their enmity was concentrated into two rival parties only, typical of the conflict of earth and sea. If the blues won the games, the fishermen and sailors expected prosperous navigation and rich yields on the deep blue sea; if the greens conquered, the husbandmen awaited abundant harvest and large fruit crops. The rivalry had deepened and spread; rulers and ministers had fostered and intensified it for state or personal gain, thinking to divert the people's attention thus from their own ill doings; the gladiatorial section of the populace encouraged the factions for the sake of their own calling, and the mandates and banes of the Church—thundered with such deadly effect against all heathens and heretics—were invoked in vain on behalf of peace, or not invoked at all.

It was scarcely safe for a well-known leader of either party to be alone in the lower quarters of the city, even in the daytime, and night was a time of utter lawlessness, of untold crime, of violence by dagger and noose.

In the reign of Theodoric, imperial authority had to be interposed between the blues in power and their unfortunate rivals, and in the reign of Anatasinus the green faction had retaliated by murdering no fewer than 3,000 of their enemies at a public feast.

From then the rivalry spread everywhere; became a feud, a vendetta, destined to be quenched only in the life blood of innocent thousands then unborn; and after a brief pause in the reign of Justin, broke out with renewed virulence when Justinian and Theodora assumed the imperial purple, and openly favoured the blue. The privileged party grew boastful, darkly hinting at a terrible reprisal in store for their foes, and went about in the barbaric dress of the Huns—closely-fitting sleeves and ample garments; cultivating the long hair, and imitating the lofty step and the sonorous voice of that people. And as the blues grew insolent, the greens grew desperate, and the bitterness of the feud increased.

So, as the day of the great race, which was fixed for the first day after the Whitsuntide festival proper, drew nearer, Rhesus became a person of great importance, the object of a hundred happily-frustrated plots, the recipient of almost royal care; and when the sun of the eventful morning lit the waters of the bay and gilded the giant cross on Sophia, he was more talked about than anyone in the city. His age, weight, height, strength, health, parentage, opinions and fancies, were common knowledge, and common sources of dispute and wagers in the many drinking places of the gladiatorial quarter, and when he set forth from the house of Proclus to the Hippodrome he went guarded by a chosen band of fifty well-armed friends, all dressed in olive green.

It was a glorious day, and so hot that the great awning was drawn completely over the Hippodrome, to shield the people and the performers alike from the glare of the sun. The circling seats, rising tier above tier, were crowded to their utmost capacity, thousands more stood in the aisles and passages and climbed into the niches of the wall, some even stood on the sand of the arena itself, risking everything for the excitement of the hour. There were all sorts and conditions of women and men, all sects, all nationalities, all fashions of dress. There were arrogant Huns and lordly Vandals, Goths and Visigoths, swarthy Egyptians and darker Moors, Persians and Sythians, and islanders galore. The sombre clothes of the workers were mingled with the gay apparel and bright colours of the parasites of Society—the functionaries of the court, the soldiers of the guard, the ladies free and fair—and through all the throng, here scattered, there massed in clusters, were the badges of blue and green.

The first rounds of the conflict were tame, and interested little. The greens carried all before them, so well were their champions trained, and even in the antique contests of sword against trident and net, sword against spear, foot against horse, revived for the occasion, the blue faction but held their own. Then it was Rhesus' turn.

"Now," said Sibron aside to him, as the first two chariots dashed off from the starting line amid a burst of cheers, "you must make the running from the first, and not draw rein for anything that may be shouted at you as you pass round. There is a plot brewing even now, that I have luckily got some faint hint of, to bring you to grief on your way, and your only chance is to go right on, caring for nothing, but keeping slightly to the front always. Once you fall behind you are doomed."

"I understand," said Rhesus, setting his teeth with determination, "they will try to throw an obstacle in my way, and if I keep just ahead of the other, they will not dare, lest it upset their own chariot also."

"I can trust you now," said the keeper. "And if you win this event, and we can disable one of the blues by this self-same trick, the balance of the day's result will be ours. They have won the first race even now."

A storm of applause, mingled with cries of anger, rose from the mighty concourse as he spoke. The driver of the blue chariot had passed the goal a good length ahead, the blue flag rose above the green.

Then Rhesus sprang into his car and seized the reins of his practised steeds, and side by side with his rival in blue, awaited the signal.

As his gaze passed round that seething sea of faces, all glowering with excitement and fierce hope, he noticed the Emperor and his boldly-beautiful consort in the purple seat, watching with eager intentness, and behind them the Court officials and the rows of bishops and priests, and he turned sick at heart to think how easily that human ocean could be lashed into terrible storm. Then, as the edile cracked his whip and he shouted to his horses, Rhesus caught sight of the face of little Eutasia amongst a group who stood within the ring, and the little maid's saucy nod and smile put new courage into him as he swept away.

At first, Hermiot, his rival, took the lead, but Rhesus laid on the thong with right good will, and heedless of cries from

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the crowd that his axle-trees were breaking, gradually drew level, and then, with a splendid spurt, gained the inside curve at a turning, and shot to the front. Hermiot flung at him an anathema as he passed with a smile on his face, and lashed his steeds with savage fury, but Rhesus kept to the inside edge and twice went round the sanded course in front and in safety. One more round, and the race would be won.

The pace was furious now. Rhesus dared not slacken speed and so reserve himself for the last few lengths, for Hermiot thundered close behind, and the breath of his horses came in hot jets against his back.

Through the cloud of dust that swept round with them, Rhesus saw the people standing up on the seats in their frenzy of excitement, and heard their cries of encouragement or rage, and the odds that were being shouted from one to another.

When half the last round was run, the blue made a desperate effort, and the nostrils of his steeds drew alongside those of the green for an instant. Then they failed again, and Rhesus made up the headway once more, urging on his coursers with both voice and thong. A few more moments of mad energy, and then victory would have been his.

As he dashed on towards the goal, past the place where the Imperial party sat, Hermiot suddenly sprang his horses forward again, and before Rhesus could catch the warning cry that a little green-clad figure uttered piercingly as it flashed across the sand towards him, his foe leapt upon him and seized the reins, and drew his steeds back upon their haunches, leaving his own to go on as they listed.

It was done so suddenly that Rhesus had not time to prevent it, but he turned fiercely when he recovered from the shock, and snatching the thong from Hermiot's hand and seizing him round the neck, bore him to the floor of the car. There they struggled while the frightened animals tore on again.

Hermiot was not the stronger, but he was yet so powerful that Rhesus could not disengage himself as they glared at each other in the swaying car; and the latter felt that the foul trick had lost him the race. He kept his foe down, however, and presently the car steadied, and the galloping slowed considerably and then ceased, amongst a roar of concentrated anger such as he hoped never to hear again. Yet there was a note of admiration mingled with it, and as the two loosed their grasp and looked sullenly about them, they saw the little maid holding the heads of the panting brutes who had borne the car along whilst they fought.

But the empty chariot of Hermiot had passed the winning line first, and the judges, secretly under the protection of the Empress Theodora, and bribed by the blue faction, gave out that Rhesus had been defeated, and the race must go to the blue.

An angry howl of rage went up from the greens at that, and Justinian, anxious not to carry his favouritism too far all at once, overruled the judgment, and held that the event must be considered a tie, as the horses were so nearly equal. The Empress looked displeased, and black glances appeared on many faces, but for once he held firm, and the flags went up together, side by side.

Old Sibron was beside himself with fury, and when Rhesus passed him on the way to the stables, little Eutasia perched upon the back of one of the steeds with all the grave assurance of her dozen years, he grunted surlily that folks who could not keep their eyes open were no good as charioteers.

Before Rhesus could reply, Eutasia, with ready speech, had answered for him.

"It was not his fault, old curmudgeon. He was keeping ahead, as you told him, and could not see Hermiot behind. You had better drive a chariot yourself, Sibron."

The grim fellow's face wrinkled to a smile at her sauciness, and he bade them pass on. As he spoke, a burst of applause told that the blues had won the third race, and by the time Rhesus had came out of the stable again, they had won the last.

It was not safe, as Proclus said, in the state of public temper, to pay the foe back in their own coin.

So they saw the blue in the ascendant for the rest of the afternoon, and when the games were over and the flushed thousands poured out into the streets, those of the green badges hied them away to their homes with all the speed they could.

The city was given over to wild rejoicings and carousals, and so many were the flags and banners and garlands of the conquering faction that were everywhere displayed, that the capital seemed suddenly draped in blue. And all the night long Rhesus heard at intervals the cry of "*Nika!*"* and the shrieks of belated citizens who had fallen into the clutches of the roving bands of the victors and could not answer to the watchword. It was a night of terror; a foretaste of that still more awful night of fear that was yet to come.

(*To be continued.*)

* NOTE.—"Nika!"—vanquish—the watchword of the factions.

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THE CROCHET NEEDLE.

Miss Lily sat in close companionship as usual, with her familiar spirit, a piece of crocheted edging. Miss Lily was still pretty, with the pathetic beauty held as flotsam from the wreck of years. Her hair was prettier as silver than it had ever been as brown, and her eyes, though they had lost their vivid glow and eagerness, had gained a kindly sympathy.

Her tenderness had even extended to the crocheting in her hand, and imparted something to that usually very impersonal object that her fancy had fretted into thinking a response.

"It's almost done," she thought. "I can go back to the oak leaf soon."

A change in the crochet pattern was the chief diversion of Lily's life, that ran on as monotonously to the observer as the tune of the famous harper who played upon only one string.

She wondered as she sat staring dully at the blaze, how the crocheting had come to mean so much to her, and could not think for the instant; then half remembered, saddened a little, lost the thread of memory again, recovered it, and fell to musing, her elbow resting on the table, her cheek in her palm.

She could hardly believe now that a certain few years of her life had ever really happened. They must have belonged to some other and wandered wilfully into her own, for there was no home for them in hers, or likeness unto anything they brought.

She was still looking vaguely, half wistfully, at the fire when her door-bell rang, and someone had entered the room and was hurrying to her side.

"Aunt Lily," said a girlish, tremulous voice, "I've come to ask you to help me. Mother said you had suffered like this once, and you had learnt to forget, and I thought perhaps you could show me the way."

"What is it, Grace?"

"Oh, it's Phil!" she cried. "He doesn't care for me any more. He's paying attention to Jennie Thompson now, and I can't bear it. Mother said other women have to bear such things, but she'd always been happy and I could come to you. You could help me," she said, looking up appealingly. "You could teach me to forget."

"Yes," said her aunt slowly.

Then it came back to her, all her own little story, and a dim, broken memory of the first heartache and her own longing to forget.

"Poor little girl," whispered Lily, stroking her beautiful mass of golden hair. "How was it I learnt to forget? Let me think. Yes, I remember now. Wait a minute, dear, I will show you."

She slipped out of the room and soon returned, bringing three rolls of very broad crocheted lace.

"Can you crochet, Grace?"

"Not very much," said Grace wonderingly.

"Well, I will teach you. This is the very way I learnt to forget. The needle slips in and out, and the sunlight and firelight shine on it, and the lace grows and is so pretty, and it brings comfort. When I began I couldn't see the needle—Oh, how long ago that is!—for the tears. That was when I knew he would never come again, and I had my wedding dress all ready—it's grown yellow in a chest in the garret. But after a while the lace took up my trouble drop by drop till it was gone, and I couldn't tell you to-day where it is. So I'll teach you, dear. There are the three rolls I did in the three years, one for each. They are yellow now, you see.

"If I'd been a man, I should have gone away to Africa. But I couldn't very well, so I learnt to crochet. I never gave the lace away, you see, because I had worked my trouble into it, and I was afraid. This is the first year's—you see I've numbered it one—and this is the second's, and this is the third's. There's the three."

Lily handled the rolls over and over, lost for a minute in the associations which they revived. Her niece seemed to have forgotten her own grief for the time and was observing her aunt curiously as she bent over the lace.

Lily sat silent for a time, smoothing out the creases of the lace and drawing it out to its length. It seemed to have the effect of an enchanter's wand, for it summoned old scenes and faces at will, and Lily grew blind to the little room, and the needs of her guest. At last Grace moved impatiently.

"Yes, yes," said Lily, like one awakenening, "to forget. This is the way. Here is the old pattern. I will teach you."

Grace took the needle helplessly.

"Do you think I could forget so, aunt?" she asked hesitatingly.

"I did," said Lily.

Grace had returned to her task and made one or two awkward motions with the needle when there came a ring at the door.

"It's Phil!" exclaimed Grace, springing up.

"Grace!" said the recreant lover, standing awkwardly by the door, after Aunt Lily had admitted him and had retreated towards her chair. There were shame and pleading in his voice.

"We'll try the crocheting some other time, Aunt Lily," said Grace.

Then seeing her aunt's half-dazed expression, as if she hardly understood this new development of affairs, she ran back and kissed her. Grace's face bore no trace of sadness as she turned to Phil, and they went on chatting merrily.

Lily listened till the last footfall on the gravel had died away, then carefully rolled up the lace.

"She think's she happier, but I'm not so sure. A man's heart is uncertain property, but a crochet needle," as she laid her hand approvingly upon those on the table, "is always the same."

W. Fraser.

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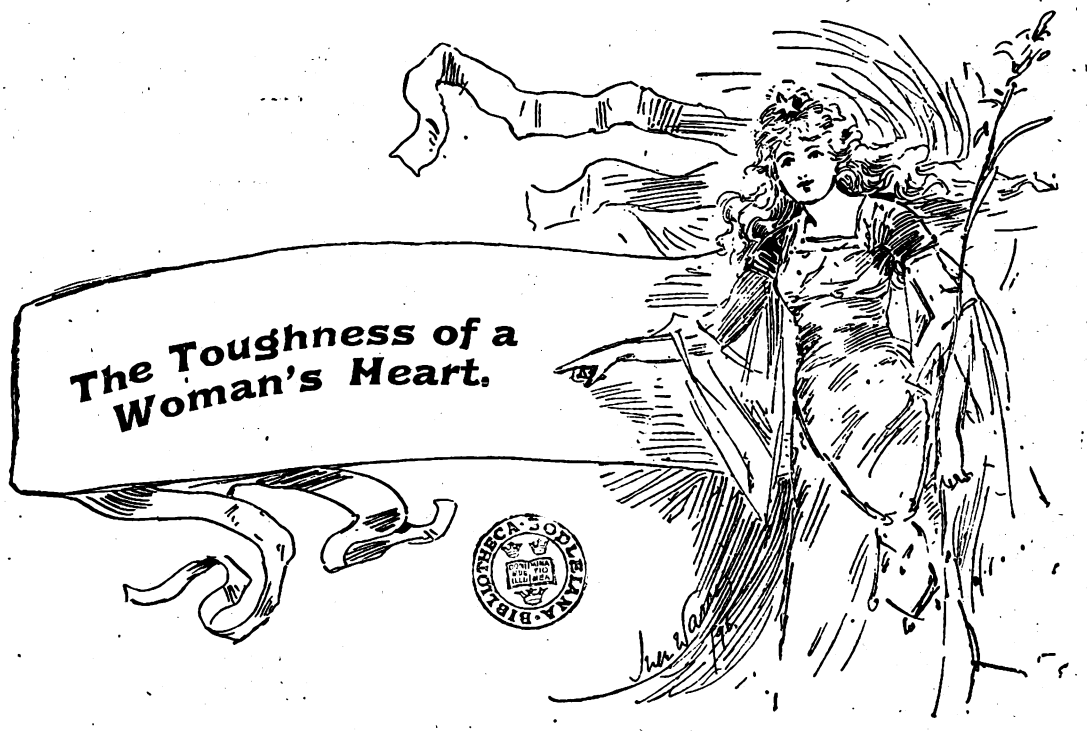

The Toughness of a Woman's Heart.

FOR five-and-twenty years past I have never seen *Romeo and Juliet* billed for representation without an involuntary shudder. Is there a story connected with it in my memory? Well, yes, there is, and one almost as tragic in its incidents as those embodied in Shakespeare's immortal story of an unhappy love.

We were playing in a small north-country town. Business was not good, the treasury was sometimes empty, and salaries were not always forthcoming.

It was at Smalltown that Roy Raneleigh joined us. Our first juvenile had left us the week before. Poor fellow, he was in the last stage of consumption, and returned to London to die. Roy Raneleigh, who took his place, was a young fellow who had been lawyer, litterateur, and something of an amateur actor.

He was a born Bohemian, if I ever met one, and the life of a strolling player with its occasional privations seemed to suit a temperament that under the gloomiest skies could be buoyant, hopeful and happy. His very presence revived the drooping spirits of most of us, and with his first appearance business picked up wonderfully.

We opened in Smalltown with *The Lady of Lyons*, a play not quite so hackneyed a quarter of a century ago as it is to-day. Roy Raneleigh played Claude to as sweet a Pauline as ever held an audience captive.

Caroline Chamberlain might not be called beautiful in the common acceptation of a grievously misused word. Her face defied criticism and baffled description; but it was just such a face as would live in the memory of an artist or a poet for half a lifetime. She was the daughter of an actor, and had already given promise of success in that profession in which she had been born.

It might be truly said she lived for her art, and had no other hope or aspiration but to win distinction in it. But before the expiration of a week I knew that the passion she had so often simulated on the stage had touched her heart at last.

Yes, she loved Roy Raneleigh, and the knowledge came to me with a benumbing sense of dreary desolation. I had known Carrie Chamberlain from her childhood, and although it is not often that a man loves in his maturer years the little girl he remembers in short dresses and pinafores, I nursed against my better reason, that foolish passion in my heart of hearts.

Of course, I quietly submitted to the inevitable, and after all, there is no sounder philosophy than that "which teaches acquiescence and optimism." But there was another member of the company who also divined the girl's secret. He was one of her most persistent lovers, albeit a rejected one.

It is singular how quickly an unsuccessful lover will read in the glance of the woman he loves the message that is meant for another. The man who loves and is beloved may mistake its meaning, but his jealous rival, never.

We were gathered on the stage one gloomy forenoon waiting for rehearsal.

Roy Raneleigh and Carrie were engaged in a quiet conversation at the wings, when Earle Staunton approached me. There was an ugly look on his rather handsome face as he surveyed the pair intently.

"Do you see that rooster yonder? He has been but a week or two with the company, and already monopolises all Miss Chamberlain's society."

"And she seems to like it, doesn't she?" I remarked dryly.

"You think she cares for him, Halstead?"

"I believe she loves him," I answered, and regretted the words as soon as spoken.

Earle Staunton had never been popular with his

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professional brethren. He was a man of superior education and a fairly successful actor, but morose and cynical; his manner was repellent to those who were disposed to live in a brotherhood of social good-fellowship.

As I left the theatre two nights later I was overtaken by Staunton. It was an off-night with him, and he took the opportunity to inflame the demon of jealousy in his breast by strong potations. His speech was almost inarticulate as he muttered:

"That cur Raneleigh had a sinister object in joining our company, Halstead; and I mean to defeat it at all hazards."

"I do not understand you," I said coldly, for his society was particularly repugnant to me at that moment.

"Oh, yes, you do understand me," he answered with drunken insolence; "your friend Mr. Raneleigh is a scoundrel, and he has won Carrie Chamberlain's love for the basest purpose."

"I do not care to listen to this nonsense," I said. "My friend Mr. Raneleigh I believe to be a worthy and an honorable gentleman."

"Oh! of course he is," was the sneering retort; "but like Cassio, you see, he is 'framed to make women false.' I tell you I have the evidence of his villainous intentions," he cried hoarsely.

"Pshaw! Staunton, you are a trifle melodramatic in your virtuous indignation. Go home and sleep, my boy, and wake in better temper. A man is not necessarily a scoundrel because he supplants one with the girl one loves."

The days passed on, and Earle Staunton was steadily drifting on the downward grade. At last the manager was obliged to reprimand him sharply, for stupid from drink he had forgotten his lines, and compromised the success of our performance on more than one occasion. Believe me, he is essentially a weak man who seeks solace in the wine cup for a woman's fickleness.

It was our last night at Smalltown, and Miss Chamberlain's benefit. A week before we had all learnt of her engagement to Roy Raneleigh. They were to be married on the return of the company to London, and both looked forward with the glowing anticipations of youth and love to the day when their lives should be inseparably interwoven.

The play was *Romeo and Juliet*, and Carrie looked a very lovely heroine as she stood beside her handsome lover before the curtain was rung up. I would not willingly play the eavesdropper to a lovers' *tête-à-tête*, but I could not avoid hearing the following conversation.

"Dear Roy, I wish you were playing Romeo to-night. I cannot understand why you should have chosen Mercutio instead, when—when——"

"Why do you pause, my love? When you are the Juliet, you would say. My fair Carrie, our love is something too sacred in my thoughts to parade it on the stage to-night in acting the lovers. And then Mercutio is a part in which it is so hard to reach the ideal of the Shakespearian critic. I have been always ambitious to play Mercutio, Carrie."

"Ah! Roy, even when a man loves, his heart owns a divided allegiance. How different it is with a woman!"

As he drew the little head down on his breast and kissed the golden hair that crowned it, a cry of rage, but ill-suppressed, escaped the lips of Earle Staunton. He was standing by my side dressed as Tybalt, his hand clutched tightly his rapier's hilt.

His face was of an ashen paleness, and his bloodshot eyes, inflamed with drink and passion, glared with the fury of a wild beast's on the unconscious lovers.

Shocked and disgusted beyond expression I turned away without addressing him, and took my place beside the prompter's desk.

The opening scenes passed over tamely, but on the balcony Juliet won her way into the hearts of her audience, and Roy Raneleigh, standing in the wings, lost not a graceful gesture of the girlish figure, not an intonation of the sweetly modulated voice that told the story of a coy, impassioned love. I have seen many Mercutios in the course of a long professional career, but never anything finer than Raneleigh's rendition of that difficult part.

He gave the Queen Mab speech with excellent judgment, and rare felicity of expression, but he fairly roused the house in that scene where Romeo declines the quarrel that Tybalt would thrust upon him.

How superbly he declaimed the lines:

> Oh, calm, dishonourable, vile submission!
> A la staccata carries it away;
> Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

How vividly the scene that followed arises before my mental vision to-night! At his cue Tybalt rushed back to the stage. The few intervening words of the text were spoken. A clash of glittering steel, a murderous thrust from Tybalt's blade, and Mercutio sank back into Benvolio's arms, pierced through the breast.

Trembling with horror, I lowered the curtain hurriedly as Staunton rushed past me with the bloodstained rapier in his hand.

Dashing across the stage, I tore apart the pale blue velvet doublet that Raneleigh wore. It was dappled with his heart's blood, and a sob burst from my lips.

He looked up in my face, and while a wan smile played round his mouth he murmured the words which now had a terrible reality:

"'Tis not as deep as a well, nor as wide as a church door; but 'tis enough."

They were the last words he ever uttered, for three minutes later he was dead.

After the lapse of so many years I cannot recall without a shudder the awe-inspiring, speechless grief of Carrie Chamberlain, as she sank upon the breast of her murdered lover. We found Earle Staunton in the dressing room, and in his death agony. "The ruling passion is strong in death." In true dramatic fashion, he had fallen on his own sword, and thus expiated the murder he had committed in the frenzy of unrequited love.

But you would learn the fate of the heroine of this story.

No; she did not die of a broken heart. A woman's heart is very sensitive and susceptible to tender impressions, but that organ of her sex is tough, sir, very tough, and warranted to survive a great deal of wear and tear of emotional feeling.

I have found Mrs. Halstead, *née* Carrie Chamberlain, an excellent woman, who has never allowed the memory of an early love to interfere with her duties and responsibilities as a faithful wife.

J. MACLAREN.

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THE MAN WHO WAS TOO SURE.

"How can you tolerate it, Lu?" exclaimed Mrs. Gorman. "If he *is* my brother, I say it is a shame!" Then, allowing her listener no time to reply, the energetic little lady rattled on: "I suppose you and Clarence must have an understanding, or you would have discharged him long ago. Here has Sidney Lawrence been waiting and serving you no less patiently than Jacob for Rachel, these seven years and more, and yet my recreant brother is the favoured one.

"Unless you take him in hand soon your roses and lilies will wither, and even faithful Sidney will come to worship at a younger, fairer shrine. Everyone supposes that you and Clarence are engaged, and yet he has never in so many words made you an offer of marriage.

"Now, while we know that he considers you his betrothed, he does not seem to realise the embarrassing position in which this tedious courtship places you, and should therefore be brought to a knowledge of it, or punished for his delinquency."

During the earlier portion of her friend's remarks a smile hovered round Lulu Brandon's lips, and she continued her task of cutting the leaves of the last new magazine; but as the final sentence was pronounced her face flushed deeply.

"My private affairs need not concern the public, Belle," she replied with dignity. "But I agree with you that I have been too patient. I acknowledge myself to be considerably at fault, for I proved an easy conquest, and Clarence may have grown lukewarm in his affection, feeling so secure of mine. Of course, a word or two from me and I might become a wife within the next month; but all such words must come from my lord himself."

Her brief displeasure gone, with a laugh she rose and linked her arm in that of her friend, and drawing her to a cosy sofa in one corner of the room, proceeded to formulate plans by which she should bring her lover to terms without his knowledge of her conspiracy.

That evening, at tea, Mr. Clarence Curtis suddenly inquired:

"Been over to the Brandons' to-day, Belle?"

"Yes; and, by the way, Clarence, Lu requested me to tell you not to call this evening, as she will be engaged."

"All right, sis; I'll go round to the theatre with Roberts."

There was a significant twinkle in her eyes as Mr. Gorman rejoined:

"I hope you'll enjoy the play. The Kendals are drawing large houses."

Two hours later Mr. Clarence Curtis was leisurely scanning the crowded theatre, bowing to those he recognised, when, just previous to the rising of the curtain, his friend Roberts exclaimed:

"Why, as I live, there's Sid Lawrence! Who knew he had returned? I wonder who the lady is! Can it be possible? It's Miss Brandon! I never supposed she would accept any other escort save yourself. What is it, Curtis, a lover's quarrel?"

Veiling his surprise with a forced smile, Curtis nonchalantly replied:

"Not to my knowledge." Then he added, somewhat impatiently, "I am no ogre. Lu has a right to go where and with whom she pleases."

In spite of the indifferent manner and careless tone, Roberts noted that his theatre-loving friend took far less interest in the play than in the couple who occupied one of the boxes nearly opposite to where they were seated.

Lu had surely never looked so exquisitely dainty and beautiful as to-night. She seemed the embodiment of health, all aglow with happiness. Yet the lovely face and graceful figure irritated him by the very beauty of which he had always been proud. This radiant piece of flesh and blood did not seem so exactly his property as formerly. Was it because Sidney Lawrence was so attentive?

They had been children together, Sid and Lu, and he knew she had always regarded the studious, dignified boy and man as an elder brother, while she gave the love of her young heart to his comrade and chum.

How well he recalled the days, years ago, when Sid had told him with sad eyes and tremulous voice that Lulu had rejected him! He comforted him as best he could, selfishly exulting in the thought that he possessed her love unasked, unsought. Strange that his possession never seemed quite so valuable as to-night! He wondered what Sidney was saying to make her smile

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and blush so deeply. Well, the act would soon be over, and then he and Roberts would go and see them, and so give the public to understand that matters were as usual between him and Miss Brandon.

With this thought he resolutely turned his attention to the stage, and perseveringly held it there until the curtain fell. Then, turning to Roberts, he proposed that they should go over to the opposite box.

As they entered it Sidney greeted them in his usual sincere and hearty manner, while Lulu, with a smile, gave her hand first to Clarence and then to Roberts, at the same time motioning her lover to a seat by her side.

As Roberts for a few moments engaged Sidney in conversation, Curtis managed to ask Miss Brandon why she had not informed him of her desire to come to the theatre. She frankly replied that she had felt no special wish to do so until Sidney unexpectedly called and asked her to accompany him.

This she told him with a manner so devoid of coquetry that he felt reassured, and left her with a complacent feeling that he was quite sure of her affection.

He called to see her the next evening as usual, and nothing was said of the recent incident. Clarence's brief jealousy was forgotten, and he calmly accepted the old conditions of things. Why should he be in haste to marry even the most charming girl in the world?

He hesitated to give up the freedom and luxury of bachelorhood for the restraints which marriage must inevitably bring. Lulu was such a delightful companion and sweetheart! Would she be equally charming as a wife? Whether or not she wished to marry he never conjectured. He had always lived for his own comfort, and self was his first consideration. So when he left her that evening the words were still unspoken which would bind her to him, and he was yet a free man.

A fortnight passed as usual, with no change in the relations of the two. Lulu was a proud girl, and Mrs. Gorman's look of inquiry every time they now met was hard to bear. Matters reached a climax on the day when Belle incautiously said:

"I have been scolding Clarence about you, Lulu. I tell him he will rue his indifference when it is too late."

"Indeed!" Lulu's laugh was rather forced. "And what did my lover say?"

"Oh! that he was sure of you, or something of that sort. He is abominably conceited, though he is my brother."

"Are not all men so?" asked Lulu lightly, but her eyes were like sparks.

When at eight o'clock next evening Clarence called to see Miss Brandon, the maid informed him that she had just "gone out with Mr. Lawrence." Again the green-eyed monster seized the tardy wooer, and this time it wonderfully quickened his latent love.

He resolved to ask the important question at once. Early the next morning he went to the home of his sweetheart, only to find that she had gone out for the day. Clarence was seriously disturbed. He felt that something was wrong. If he could only see Lulu for a few minutes matters would be settled to his satisfaction, he assured himself. But, alas! that little word "if" has often proved a barrier stronger than prison walls or iron bands.

For weeks he was baffled in every attempt to see Miss Brandon alone, until he was forced to admit that she purposely sought to evade a meeting with him. This only made him more eager and determined to bring one about, but more than two months elapsed before he succeeded in securing the long and much desired interview.

At last he wrote her a note, requesting somewhat imperatively to be allowed to see her privately. The reply was brief, simply stating that she would receive him that evening at 8 o'clock.

Promptly at the time designated Clarence entered the familiar room, and was greeted cordially by Lu, who yet evaded the accustomed lover-like caress.

"'Great minds run in the same channel,' Clarence. At the moment I received your note I was writing you an invitation to call."

This little speech quickly dissipated the suspicion which had risen in his mind at his reception, and he resolved to state the object of his call without delay.

"Dear Lulu," he said, taking her hand in his, "I have come this evening to ask you to name an early date for our marriage. I want my wife as soon as possible."

She allowed him to retain her hand, but the crimson deepened upon her fair cheeks as she replied:

"Clarence, I have something to say which may give you pain. During the last few years I have been dimly conscious that we are not exactly suited to each other, although a month ago I should have indignantly refuted such an implication from anyone else. I am now fully convinced that if united we should not be happy. More than this," here she spoke very softly and tenderly, "I have been mistaken in the object of my affection, and I know that I have never truly loved anyone but Sidney Lawrence."

Speechless and pale Clarence's eyes sought hers beseechingly. At last he realised the magnitude of his love for the woman his selfishness had put for ever from his life. But he read no hope in her face and in silence he rose and left her.

Years have passed since then. Clarence Curtis has never married, and the gossips say the handsome bachelor silently worships the wife of Sidney Lawrence.

PERCY GOODMAN.

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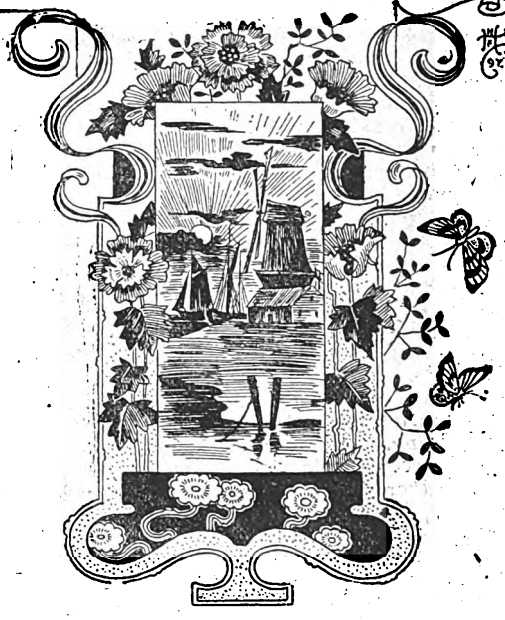
THE FOUNDING OF MATANZAS.



There was once upon a time a man who led a very merry life, taking no thought of the morrow; and since to run in debt without having the means to pay is the sure road to the poor-house, in a very short time our hero was left with nothing he could call his own but thirty days in the month, and with nothing to exercise his teeth upon but his nails.

So that little by little he fell into such a state of dejection that he would allow his wife to beat him and his children to abuse him when he returned home at night empty-handed, without uttering a word in protest.

Finally, he grew tired of his life, and, borrowing a rope from one of his cronies, he went into a field to hang himself.

Having fastened one end of the rope to an olive tree, he was about to put the other round his neck when there appeared before him a dwarf, attired in a friar's robe and cowl, who said to him quietly:

"What is that you are going to do, my good man?"

"Cannot your worship see what I am going to do? To hang myself," he answered.

"So you, a Christian, are going to do what Judas did? Stop; that isn't right. Take this purse, which is never empty, and relieve your necessities."

Taking the purse from the dwarf's hand, Uncle Curro, for such was our hero's name, took a peseta out of it, and then another and another, until he saw that, like the words coming out of a woman's mouth, there seemed to be no end to them. Seeing which, he untied the rope from the tree, rolled it up, and started for home.

On the road there was a tavern, which he entered, and calling for the best the house could afford in meat and drink, he paid the score on the spot, for the tavern-keeper, knowing him of old, would not trust him to so large an amount, and he ate and ate, and drank and drank, until finally he fell off his chair and rolled under the table quite intoxicated.

The tavern-keeper, who had seen that the purse from which Uncle Curro had taken the money remained as full as before, told his wife to make another purse like it, and when this was done he took Uncle Curro's purse from his pocket and put in its place the one his wife had made.

When Uncle Curro awoke he set out again for home, where he arrived as merry as a cricket.

"Rejoice!" he cried to his wife and children. "Here is money in plenty; our days of poverty are over."

He put his hand into his pocket, and took it out again—empty; he put it in again, and again he took it out empty.

When his wife saw this she was so enraged that she gave him a blow that sent him spinning.

More dejected than ever, Uncle Curro again took the rope, and went once more into the fields to hang himself. Arrived at the same spot as before, he was proceeding to tie the rope to a branch of the same tree when he heard a voice near by saying:

"What is that you are going to do, good man?" and lifting up his eyes he saw before him the dwarf, seated astride a branch of the olive tree.

"To hang myself, like a string of garlic from a kitchen rafter," answered Uncle Curro very coolly.

"So you have lost your patience again?" said the dwarf.

"And no wonder," replied Uncle Curro, "when I have nothing to eat."

"That is your own fault, entirely your own fault. But never mind. Come here. Take this table-cloth, and so long as you keep it in your possession you shall never want for something to eat."

So saying, the dwarf handed Uncle Curro a table-cloth, and then disappeared among the branches of the olive tree. Uncle Curro spread the table-cloth on the ground, which he had no sooner done than it was covered with the richest viands, so exquisitely prepared, that not the king's cook himself could have surpassed them. Of course Uncle Curro ate until he could eat no longer, and then, folding his table-cloth, he put it in his pocket and set out for home.

Stopping to rest at the same inn as before, he was overcome with sleep, and lay down to take a nap. The innkeeper, who recognised him at once, suspected that he had something of value with him, and cautiously taking the table-cloth out of his pocket, he put in its stead the soiled cloth from the table of the inn.

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When Curro reached home, he cried out to his wife and children:

"Come, come and eat; and this time, take my word for it, there shall be no disappointment." Then he unfolded the table-cloth, which, instead of viands, was seen to be covered with stains of all sizes and of every colour. At this the storm broke loose. Wife and children fell upon him and beat him, until they left him a fit subject for the hospital.

Uncle Curro took a rope, and went again into the fields to hang himself. This time he persisted in his purpose of hanging himself, and the dwarf persisted in his that he should not.

At last the little friar ended the discussion by giving Uncle Curro a cudgel, telling him that with that in his hands he need never be troubled by anyone again, and that all he had to do was to say:

"Cudgel, lay about you!" for everyone to run away from him, and leave him in peace and quiet.

Uncle Curro took the road home with his cudgel, as proud as an alcalde with his wand of office, and the moment he saw his children coming toward him, asking for something to eat, with insulting and abusive words as they were accustomed to see their mother do, he said to his cudgel:

"Cudgel, lay about you!"

No sooner had he pronounced the words than the cudgel began to shower blows to right and left among the children, until they had scarcely a whole bone left in their bodies.

His wife ran to her children's assistance.

"At her, cudgel!" said Uncle Curro: "at her and with a will!"

And the cudgel belaboured the wife so unmercifully that she died of her injuries.

The authorities being notified, the alcalde, accompanied by his officers, presented himself upon the scene.

"Cudgel, lay about you!" said Uncle Curro, as soon as they appeared; and the cudgel proceeded to deal such lusty blows among them that every blow was worth a peseta; so that the alcalde was killed and the officers took to their heels and were out of sight in a trice.

A messenger was sent to the King to inform him of what was going on, and the King sent a regiment of grenadiers to seize Uncle Curro and his cudgel. No sooner did Uncle Curro see them approach than, throwing the cudgel among their ranks, he cried:

"Cudgel, lay about you!"

And the cudgel straightway began to dance upon the ribs of the grenadiers, making a noise like the clapper of a mill. One it left lame; another with a disabled arm; and the Captain it left blind of an eye.

To make an end of the business, the grenadiers all threw their guns and knapsacks on the ground and ran off helter-skelter, as if they thought Old Nick had broken loose and was running after them.

With his mind at rest, Uncle Curro lay down to take a nap, hiding his cudgel in his breast, lest it should be stolen from him during his sleep.

When he awoke he found himself bound hand and foot and on his way to prison, where, on his arrival, he was sentenced to the ignominious death of the garrote.

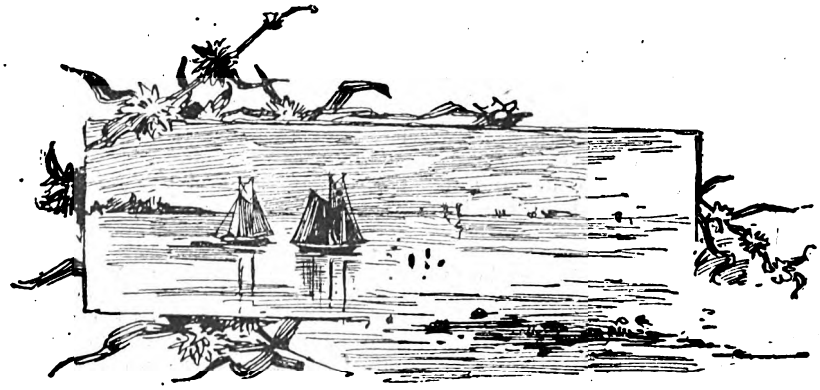
On the following morning he was taken from his cell and led out to execution. On the scaffold his hands were unbound, whereupon he took out his cudgel, and saying:

"Cudgel, lay about you!" he threw it at the executioner, who was quickly beaten by it to death.

"Set that man free!" said the King, "or he will not leave me a subject alive; tell him that I will give him a province in the West Indies on condition that he shall leave the country."

And thus it was done. The King gave him a province in the island of Cuba, where he built a city; and there he killed so many people with his cudgel that from that day to this it has been called Matanzas (the Spanish for slaughter).

Fernan Caballero.



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A Saurian Slaughter.

ABOUT forty miles above the city of Allahabad, India, there was a village called Gznai. In January, 1869, it was a place of 1,500 inhabitants. It was not built in a day exactly, but it sprang into life and attained over 500 inhabitants within thirty days. Thirty days later the population numbered 1,500. In the course of another thirty days not an inhabitant was left, and vines and plants were taking root in the principal street.

Gznai was what is known as a "crocodile town." Up to the year 1880 that religious sect which for a thousand years had lived along the Ganges and its tributaries was permitted to found these "crocodile towns," or at least the fanatical leaders were not amenable to law. The English discouraged them in many ways, but it was not until the year named that the law dealt them a death-blow. The religion of the Juggernaut appealed only to half mad fanatics.

The "crocodile faith," as it was called, was a mixture of avarice, selfishness, revenge and religion. Gznai was founded on the bank of a small lake. This lake was inhabited by crocodiles. The founder was a wandering "holy man," and no sooner was it known that he had erected his tent and "blessed" the lake than there was a rush of natives to the place.

The matter was kept secret from the British as long as possible, but when the news finally reached Allahabad preparations were promptly made for breaking up the town. About 180 native troops under charge of two British officers were sent down by boats to scatter the fanatics, and through the courtesy of Captain McArthur I was allowed to accompany the expedition.

Many horrible things had happened before we reached Gznai. Any native who wanted to be rid of wife, children, father or mother had only to convey them to the town. They were "blessed" by the old fakir in consideration of a sum of money amounting to about 2d. per head. After the blessing they were flung to the saurians. The man who wanted to be rid of an enemy could do it very cheaply, and in many instances it was done to save paying debts. A lover jealous of another denounced him to the fakir as an unbeliever, and the fakir sent out men from his bodyguard to capture him. The village had been founded eighty-seven days when we reached it, and as near as we could learn, over three hundred people had been food to the crocodiles, and we found fifty-two others held captive and waiting for death.

One of the queer things about India is the universal belief of the natives that what is to be will be, and that no one dies before his time. Everyone, poisoner and robber, has a religion. If "blessed" by an old hypocrite of a fakir a minute before death, he is happy in the belief that his soul will find rest.

Of all the captives brought to Gznai, not one had been bound or guarded. The fakir had placed his hand on their heads and announced that they would find supreme bliss in the future state, and after that they wandered about as they willed, but had no thought of escape.

When we entered the village, some of them threw themselves into the lake without orders, and others had to be driven homeward by switches.

Of the 1,500 people in the village, about one-third were rogues and rascals, gathered there to prey on the gullible. Another third supplied food and drink, and the remainder were fanatics and enthusiasts, ready to obey any command issued by the head fakir. The old rascal was making a good thing of it financially, and just before our arrival had raised his rates 50 per cent. Victims had been brought to him from a distance of sixty miles.

We reached the village at three o'clock in the afternoon. At noon that day ten persons had been given up to the crocodiles. The excitement kicked up by our arrival was intense, as every native realised what the result would be. The first move was to escort the head fakir half a mile out of town and start him off with a warning of arrest and imprisonment if he returned. The wealth he had acquired was then distributed among the captives awaiting death. At the same moment the soldiers were passing round with a switch in one hand and a firebrand in the other, and every hut and tent was soon in flames and the people scattered.

Among the captives was a man about thirty years old, who had been chief of a village twenty miles away. His own brother, a young man of twenty, had denounced him and assisted in his capture. The ex-chief had been "blessed," and was to die at sundown. To prevent him plunging into the lake, he was tied to a tree, and an hour later, when he still refused to go home, two of the soldiers made ready to "lick the religion out of him," as they termed it.

With pliant switches they cut away at his bare back for fully ten minutes before he uttered a yell. When the yell came, however, he was ready to give in and announce that he would head for home, and not tarry on the way. The most curious part of the affair was that the brother who had given him up to death stood there and witnessed the whipping, and they went off in company when it was over.

Before sundown the village had been made desolate; but the work was only half done. The orders were to remove the crocodiles and the lake as well as the people. If the first two remained, some other fakir would found another village within a year.

Next morning a survey was made of the shores of the lake. It was a body of water about six acres in extent with an average depth of ten feet, and there was every evidence that it had been a reservoir for irrigation purposes. The east shore was steep and comparatively clear, but on the other sides the bushes grew close to the water. After a tramp of two hours it was discovered that the whole lake could be drained by cutting a ditch four feet deep and eighty feet long.

Native boats were constantly passing up and down the river, and from these the captain secured a force to handle the picks and shovels. Where this ditch began a strong wooden frame was set up to prevent the

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crocodiles from passing down with the rush of the water.

The saurians had had possession of that lake for scores if not hundreds of years, and the place was literally packed with them.

While the ditch was being dug, Captain McArthur sent a report to Allahabad, and after a couple of days a six-pound fieldpiece, with plenty of ammunition, was sent up to him. His idea was to exterminate the last saurian in that lake, and the work could not have been done by the soldiers' muskets. While we were waiting for the ditch to be opened a native appeared, and asked for an interview with the captain. He introduced himself as a native doctor living in a village about fifteen miles away. On the day that we drove the people out of the village he was being brought in as a captive. When set at liberty, he became filled with anxiety. He had been denounced and captured, but not "blessed" by the fakir. He was, therefore, at a loss to know what to do. Should he return home as if never denounced? Should he hunt for the fakir, and get a blessing, or should he throw himself to the crocodiles, and take the chances of its being the proper thing to do? The man was very much in earnest and would not have gone away satisfied without receiving advice, and after a little thought the captain said to him:

"Perhaps it will be well to have two of my men whip you. I think you will feel easier in your mind after that."

The native agreed that the "experiment" was worth trying, and a couple of the soldiers cut switches, and gave him a beautiful dressing-down. They must have struck fifty blows before he turned to the captain, and said:

"Sahib, it is well with me. I now see my way clearly. I shall return to my village and be as if nothing had happened."

The men gave him three or four extra cuts to bind the bargain, and the fellow went off, with a smile on his face.

The ditch was all ready one morning after breakfast. It seemed as if the crocodiles scented danger, for they began rushing about in a furious manner. The soldiers and natives were stationed about the lake to drive back any of the reptiles which might seek the land, and presently the water began rushing down the ditch and flowing over a plain.

The lake had not been lowered more than a foot when there was a grand rush to escape by the ditch. The cannon was planted within fifty feet of the spot, and three or four shells fired into the struggling mass broke it up. Every crocodile in the lake went to the bottom, and stayed there until only about two feet of water remained to cover them. There was but little mud, and no hiding places.

We expected to see a general rush for the banks, and fires had been lighted at several points to assist in checking it. But the rush we anticipated did not take place. Instead of that there was a battle such as few men ever looked upon. Captain McArthur officially reported "about 300" crocodiles in that lake, but he agreed that the number might be one hundred more. There were no young ones at all, and but few which could be called half grown. The great majority were full grown, and no man had ever seen larger ones in India.

While the lake was a drinking place for thousands of wild animals, many of which naturally fell victims to the saurians, it was evident that the supply of food had been eked out by devouring the small fry. Not a fish or turtle was to be seen, and of the victims cast into the water in the name of faith not so much as a bone remained.

As the water was lowered and the crocodiles realised the situation, they began to fight so fiercely and vengefully that many of the natives ran away in alarm. Mud and gravel and water were thrown over the bushes and into the tree tops as the saurians thrashed about, and the hissing, bellowing, and clashing of jaws made a rumpus which was heard a mile away.

Half-an-hour after the fight began not a gallon of water was left in the lake, and then we had a clear view of the raging battle. The smaller and weaker were naturally killed off first. In a few instances large or small crocodiles left the bed of the lake and sought to escape into the jungle or make their way toward the river, but they were fired upon by the soldiers and driven back. Not a single one of them got away.

At three o'clock in the afternoon there were only about twenty crocodiles left alive, and these were the largest of the lot. Exhausted with the long and continued conflict, and each one more or less severely wounded, these survivors crept to the centre of the lake as if to rest. It was then that the fieldpiece opened on them with shell, and as the first one exploded among them the battle was renewed. The soldiers gathered with their muskets, and between shell and bullet the last saurian was soon disposed of.

The very last one to be killed was perhaps the oldest and largest of the lot. He had been wounded some years back on the top of his head and marked in a curious manner. In his death agonies he had crawled half way up the bank, and he died with his mouth open.

One of the soldiers cut a stick and placed it between his jaws to keep them open, and we were knocking out some of the teeth as relics when a native pushed his way through the crowd and said to the captain:

"Sahib, I would ask a great favour of you. If you do not grant it, I shall wish to die."

"Well, what is it?"

"The village numbered only 100 people when I brought my wife here to be blessed and thrown into the lake. She was a good woman, but of late she had talked too much. She had become curious minded. If I set out on a journey she wished to know my destination. If I was thoughtful, she wished to know if I was ill. If I was jolly, she asked me if good luck had come."

"Well?"

"And so I brought her here to be disposed of. I saw her blessed, and I saw her flung into the lake. That big crocodile got her. I knew him by that mark on his head. I now ask you for one of his teeth."

"Help yourself," replied the captain.

"Thanks, sahib. I will ever bless you. After thinking matters all over I have come to the conclusion that my wife was not such a bad woman after all. I think I was a little hasty in the matter. I will take a tooth and bury it on a hill in her memory and shall then feel all right about it."

With a stone he knocked out a tooth, repeated his thanks, and disappeared in the jungle, and as he vanished the other natives called after him:

"Ah, but he is a good man! When he has had his wife eaten by crocodiles, he does not forget that she had many virtues."

C. W. P.

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A WOLF HUNT.

A FEW years ago Prince Repnine, with two companions, engaged in a wolf hunt, which brought them more than the danger and excitement they calculated on, and came within an ace of being their last hunt.

The party set out one evening in a large sleigh; each hunter was armed with a double-barrelled gun and a hundred and fifty cartridges. The Prince commanded the road, and his companions took charge, one of each flank.

On reaching the steppe, an immense desert covered with snow, the coachman shook his reins, the horses broke into a canter, the pig began to squeal, a few wolves howled in response, and before long the hunters saw the shadowy forms of half a score of them following in the rear; but they were few in number and maintained a respectful distance, waiting for reinforcements.

But gradually their numbers increased, and they approached the sleigh, which was gliding at an easy but moderate pace over the snow, the coachman holding the excited horses well in hand. A band of at least twenty wolves was allowed to come to close quarters before the firing was commenced. A shot was fired, a wolf fell; there was great excitement, and apparently disorganisation of the troop, and it appeared to the hunters that their pursuers had been diminished one half.

In fact, seven or eight of the more famished brutes had remained behind to feast on their fallen comrade, but their ranks were soon full again; on all sides one heard howlings responded to by howlings; on all sides wolves sprang up as if out of the snow, their sharp noses showing themselves between their glowing eyes. They were at close quarters now, and numerous enough and the three hunters maintained a rolling fire into their ranks; but, although every ball hit, the band continued to increase.

Before long the troop was swollen to vast numbers, which began to crowd upon the sleigh: the pace increased with the excitement and the vast cavalcade flew over the snow, silent as death but for the dismal howlings of wolves. With their centre a few yards in the rear of the sleigh, the troops formed themselves into a crescent, the two horns of which were far in advance of the horses on either side.

The pig, which had been stimulated to squeal, was now kept as quiet as possible; the unexpected number of wolves foreboded danger, and at every cry of the pig their fury and audacity was redoubled. The firing was maintained without intermission, but already the hunters had fired away half their cartridges. There remained only about two hundred between the three of them, and they were surrounded by more than a thousand wolves.

The two horns of the living crescent began now to draw towards each other; the wolves were evidently acting in accordance with a concerted plan. They were bent on forming a circle which should inclose their prey in its centre, and gradually close in upon them till escape would be hopeless; for if only one of the horses were brought down, resistance could hardly be prolonged another minute. The horses snorted, screamed, and plunged frightfully, but nothing gave way, and the coachman maintained his control over them.

"What do you think of it, Ivan?" asked the Prince of his coachman.

"The enraged brutes have tasted blood," he said, "and the longer you continue firing the more their numbers increase. If you will leave it to me, Prince, I will turn the horses' heads homewards, and give them their heads."

"Can you rely upon them?"

"I will answer for them."

"And you will be responsible for us?"

The coachman did not reply; he saw the critical moment had arrived in which the Prince and his friends, awed by the growing terror of their situation, were not unwilling to see him take the command. Without another word he wheeled gradually round in the direction of the château, and gave the horses their heads. The noble brutes, wild with terror and excitement, no sooner felt their heads free than they bounded off at a furious pace, the sleigh scarcely seeming to hamper their movements.

The coachman, letting the horses go at their best speed, continued to wheel them round, and almost in an instant they charged down upon the flanks of the wolves, which scattered right and left as the horses plunged among them.

The horses were not galloping now; they were flying. At this moment the hunters raised their guns for another shot.

"For your lives," cried Ivan, "don't fire!"

They obeyed.

And now it was seen that the wolves had come to a standstill; they were evidently nonplussed by the unexpected manœuvre; their tactics had been spoilt, and they did not know what to do next.

In this minute of indecision the horses, straining at top speed, had shot nearly half a mile ahead, and when the wolves had renewed their pursuit they appeared to follow but slowly; the huntsmen soon ceased to fear that the wolves would overtake them.

But there was no slackening speed, and a quarter-of-an-hour later our hunters entered the courtyard of the château. The Prince estimated that in this quarter-of-an-hour the horses had covered a distance of six miles, but a severe critic might remark that he probably did not look at his watch until some minutes after the start.

The following day the Prince and his party visited the field of battle on horseback, and the bones of two hundred wolves attested to the steadiness of their shooting, and to the number that were present at the banquet.

A. L. T.

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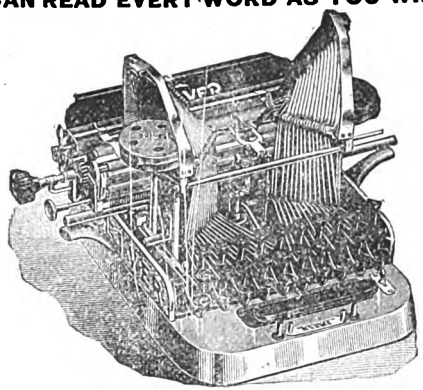

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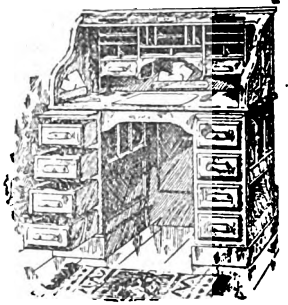

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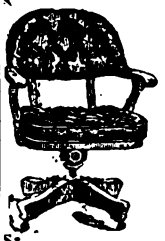

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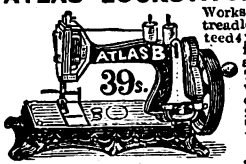

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YOU AND I.

C. N. B.—If your father was naturalised while you were a minor and living with him, this naturalised you at the same time.

CYCLE.—The order forbidding ladies to ride the bicycle in the streets of Petersburg has been cancelled, and the wheel is making progress in that country, but it is not an ideal place for cyclists on account of the too paternal solicitude of the Muscovite authorities. The would-be cyclist has to pass sundry examinations to prove that he is competent before he is allowed to ride about as he likes. And when that ordeal has been passed, riders of both sexes are ticketed with a prominent and unsightly label, setting forth the due qualifications for permission to cycle.

HOOF.—The camel's foot is like a soft cushion, and is peculiarly adapted for walking over gravel and stones. During a journey in the Sahara, the horses of British officers had to be shod three times, but the feet of the camels were not even sore.

SCHOOL.—No, it is Münster, with two dots over the u. It is in Westphalia. The public school which you mention was originally a convent school, and has just celebrated the eleven hundredth anniversary of its foundation.

CHAM.—Some of the large champagne manufacturers in Epernay have underground cellars extending over forty acres, and containing as many as 5,000,000 bottles of wine. Epernay itself may be described as a subterranean city; its streets for miles are hewn out of the chalk, and flanked with piles of champagne of all blends and qualities.

GLASS.—The single opera-glass was first used in France in the time of Louis XIV. (latter half of the seventeenth century); it became the rage, and everybody used one. The double opera-glass was invented in 1825, but did not at first find favour with the men. There is an old French treatise on the art of ogling or looking through the glass; it is quite a treatise on coquetry, and explains how a woman should hold the glass if she has well-formed arms, nicely-shaped hands, and so on.

SMOKE.—The Dutch hold the record as the champion tobacco smokers. Statistics recently compiled respecting seventeen tobacco-smoking countries show that they get through a larger quantity (per head of the population) than any other civilised nation. Our own country stands fourteenth on the list. Italy, Spain and Switzerland smoke less than we, while France consumes a little more. The United States comes next to Holland.

C. L. D.—The tramways, omnibusses, and underground railways in and around London, within a radius of five miles, carry each year about four hundred and fifty-three million passengers.

IGNORAMUS writes to ask why we call the present century the nineteenth, when we are still using 18—— and not 19——.————In counting by hundreds, from 1 to 100 is the first hundred, and so from 1800 to 1900 is the nineteenth hundred or "century."

THEATRE.—In all the capitals of Europe, except London, at least one theatre is subsidised by the Government.

S. I. G.—The largest advertising sign in the world is, of course, just where you wouldn't expect to find it. It is on the hillside of an islet off the Grand Canary. There are four words; each letter is 30ft. high, and 15ft. wide, and the bars or strokes of the letters are 3ft. 3in. broad. The sign is 750ft. long.

FLY CATCHER.—The best fly-destroyer in the world is the "common or garden" wasp. An expert states that he has known a wasp to kill hundreds of flies in one day. Still, on the whole, I think most people would prefer the flies.

PHIL asks: "Is it true that Luzon, the principal island of the Philippine group, was named after one of the discoverers?"————No. The name comes from the native word "lesong," meaning a rice mortar. When the discoverers inquired the name of the place, the natives replied "lesong," apparently under the impression that the new-comers wished to know the name of the utensils that were lying about. It is generally thought that the natives are of one and the same race with the Malays. The chief amusement of the natives of Manila is cock fighting; many of the men think a great deal more of their birds than of their wives. The Government revenue was appreciably increased by the licensing of cock-pits.

NAPOLEON.—If the statement of a recent writer be correct, Napoleon I had no luxurious tastes in the way of food. His favourite dish was a bean salad, and he thought that half-a-crown a day should be enough for anyone's meals. Louis XV. was just the opposite; he had a favourite dish that was made of the eggs of various birds and cost £20.

ARCTIC.—The fossil forest of Atanekerdluk is in Northern Greenland, about 70 degrees N. latitude. It is the most perfect fossil exhibit in the world. Sixty-six varieties of plant life have been found and recognised. It is so well preserved that on some of the leaves of the trees there have been found remains of the insects that no doubt fed upon them.

DON CARLOS.—A British legion fought in Spain against the adherents of the grandfather of the present Don Carlos. The legion was raised by Sir De Lacy Evans, Lord John Hay, and others with the object of assisting the cause of the infant Queen Isabella. The men of the legion did good work, but they could not get a farthing out of the Spanish Government afterwards for arrears of pay.

PIPE.—The latest reports show that the consumption of tobacco is decreasing in France.

BRIDGE.—The greatest natural bridge in the world spans a chasm in Utah, four miles from the little town of Moab. It is about two hundred feet high, seventy-five feet thick, and has a span of two hundred and fifty feet.

WHISTLER.—The whistling moth is an Australian rarity. There is a glassy space, crossed with ribs, on the wings of the insects; when the moth desires to whistle it strikes these ribs with its antennæ, which have a knob at the end. The sound is used as a call from the male to the female.

NAILS.—Finger nails grow, on the average, rather more than an inch and a half a year.

THE proprietor of the Tallis Court Hotel, Broadstairs, has by him a curiosity which will greatly interest our readers. In one of Lyle's Golden Syrup tins, which had evidently been thrown away, and was found upon the bank opposite his house, a robin had built her nest and laid three eggs; with what delight the loving pair took possession of this highly eligible family residence may be imagined.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
Double ,, ,,	1	0	0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page ,, ,, ...	5	0	0
Quarter-page ,, ,, ...	2	10	0
Eighth-page ,, ,, ...	1	5	0
Front page, whole ,, ,, ...	12	10	0
,, half	6	5	0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.

Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, June **28th**, if intended for the Issue on sale July **12th**, and dated July **16th**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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FOR HOME DYEING.

MAYPOLE DYES SOAP ANY COLOUR

CLEAN AND QUICK. NO MESS. NO TROUBLE.
WON'T WASH OUT OR FADE.

Silks, Satins, Cottons, Wools, Feathers, Lace,
ALL LOOK LIKE NEW WHEN DYED WITH

MAYPOLE SOAP.

ADVICE FREE BY LETTER ON HOME DYEING

Sold in All Colours, 4d. per Tablet; Black, 6d.

An ILLUSTRATED NOVELETTE, "Three Daughters of Eve," a Charming Book of Nursery Rhymes, in Colours, and an ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET, "Seven Ages of Woman," with Specimen Card of Colours on Satin. Sent Post Free on receipt of address.

Free Advice given upon Home Dyeing by letter. State plainly your requirements, and when possible enclose a small piece of the material you wish to dye.

THE MAYPOLE CO. LIMITED, 98 & 99 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real safe remedy like **KAPUTINE?**

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

From Rev. J. H. BURN. DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN, NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. **KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.**

If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

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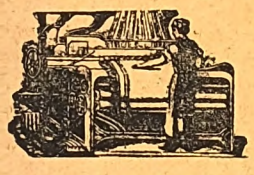
THE WORLD-RENOWNED REDUCTION IN THE PRICE OF CARPETS.

SUPPLEMENTARY, 1898.—The Utilitarian Production of the Age in Carpets! One Million to be distributed to the People of this Realm!

THIS PIONEER OFFER



IS MADE TO READERS OF *SHORT STORIES* ON RECEIPT OF POSTAL ORDER OR STAMPS, VALUE **4s. 6d.** (Regd.) We will send you Direct from the Looms, THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS FINISH WITH RUG EVER SOLD AT THE PRICE, to any address on receipt of amount, suitable for drawing-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for my goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices. SPECIAL OFFER—**TWO** CARPETS and **TWO** RUGS, **8s.** [Cut this out.]

"We have never seen a cheaper article, the wonder being how the carpet can be made and sold at the ridiculously small sum."—*Exchange and Mart.*——"Wonderful value for money."—*Church Bells.*

Hundreds of favourable Press Notices from the *Christian Globe, Christian World, Christian Age, Rock, Catholic Times*, etc., etc. Greatest bargains ever offered.

Write subject to approval or cash gladly returned. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials from all parts.

38 Railway Cottages, Willesden, May 25th.

Mrs. Evans writes: "Having had two of your Carpets and Rugs five years ago. They have worn extremely well, being in constant wear. Shall be glad if you will send me two of your "Novel" Carpets and Rugs. P.O. enclosed."

16 Slate Street, Leicester, October 9th.

W. Sawbridge, Esq., writes: "Two or three years ago I purchased one of your Carpets, and we are very pleased with the way it has stood the wear and tear that it has been subjected to. Please send two more Carpets and Rugs as advertised. 8s. enclosed."

ILLUSTRATED BARGAINS CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, SHEETINGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE.

All orders despatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household

Sale Price. **2/-** **HEARTHRUGS** Regd. *Sale Price.* **2/-**

In Reversible Rich Turkey patterns, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft wide. These Hearthrugs have gained a world-wide reputation for Magnificence, Cheapness, and Utility, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of *repeat orders* and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 for 5/9, 6 for 11/3, 12 for 22/-.

The "Queen's" Royal Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

CARPETS (REG.)

TRADE MARK ON ALL GOODS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD. Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.	Reduced Sale Price.
6ft. by 9ft. 7/6	9ft. by 9ft. 11/-	10½ft. by 12ft. 18/-	12ft. by 15ft. 25/6
8ft. by 9ft. 9/-	9ft. by 10½ft. 13/6	12ft. by 12ft. 21/-	12ft. by 18ft. 30/-
6ft. by 12ft. 10/6	9ft. by 12ft. 15/-	9ft. by 15ft. 19/6	12ft. by 21ft. 35/6
	9ft. by 13½ft. 16/6	12ft. by 13½ft. 22/-	

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE *Sale Price.*

REAL BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS 5/6

In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-.

"Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.

The Right Honourable The VISCOUNTESS MELVILLE writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39/-, one ditto 60/6 to match them. Cheque £8 14s. inclosed."

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE

REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS

Extraordinarily Heavy, very best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra-Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years, and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST,	4½ft. by 7ft. 11/-	VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	9ft. by 12ft. 38/-
	6ft. by 9ft. 18/-		11ft. by 12ft. 47/-
	7½ft. by 9ft. 23/-		12ft. by 13½ft. 59/-
	9ft. by 9ft. 28/-		12ft. by 16ft. 69/-
	9ft. by 10½ft. 33/-		12ft. by 18ft. 77/-

Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel of excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Also **RICH VELVET PILE STAIR CARPETS**, bordered to match, 18in. wide, **1/8** per yard; 22½in. wide, **2/-** per yard; 27in. wide, **2/3** per yard.

640 WHITE HONEYCOMB QUILTS, full size, 4/11 each.

These are sound, useful Bed Spreads, made from good quality cotton yarns, in diamond and various small designs, average size, 2¾yd. long and 2yd. wide, with all round knotted fringe.

OUR NEW VENTURE.—Yes, Two different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One!

H.R.H. Prince L. of Battenberg.
H.R.H. Prince K. Bigit Siam.
Marquis of Breadalbane.
Sir Henry de Bathe.
Sir Henry Bellingham.
Sir E. H. Blair, Bart.
Archbishop of York.
Copyright.
H.I.H. Eugénie de Christoforo.
Princess Palæologœ Nicephorœ. Commenœ
Princess de Croy.
Duchess of Wellington.
Marchioness of Breadalbane.
Marchioness of Hastings.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE (CHANCERY DIVISION). HODGSON v. WEBB BROTHERS.—On the 18th day of July, 1890, his lordship Mr. Justice Chitty granted an interim injunction restraining Messrs. Webb Brothers, of Hackney Wick, from infringing Mr. Fredk. Hodgson's Trade Mark, "Eclipse," No. 93,774 (Leeds).

"Given Away."

SPECIAL. 1898.

SPECIALLY REDUCED INTRODUCTION

SALE PARCEL WITH FREE GIFT

enclosed, consisting of

1 Magnificently Rich Cream-Coloured Curly Sheepskin Hearthrug, average size 6 feet by 3 feet, perfection in quality.

1 Beautiful Reversible Art Crimson Plush Bed Rug, Sofa Cover, or Table Cover, double warp, very heavy, size 50 inches by 78 inches.

2 Beautiful Silver Goatskin Door Mats, lined woollen cloth throughout, pinked edges, best finish, ornamental to any room.

1 Elegant Hair Brush, highly finished, with mirror back.

THE LOT **10/6**

The Green, Bolton Abbey, December 18th.

Lady E. D. Newenham takes this opportunity to thank Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son for the 10/6 Owl parcel sent some little time back. Every article was of more intrinsic value than the price charged. Lady Newenham would like two more parcels. Cheque 21/- enclosed."

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE "PRUDENTIAL"

REVERSIBLE CARPETS (Regd.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout, with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in twelve sizes only. These Carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian on one side, and on the reverse the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

6ft. by 9ft.	Reduced Sale Price	4s. 9d.	9ft. by 15ft.	Reduced Sale Price	12s. 6d.
7½ft. by 9ft.		5s. 11d.	12ft. by 12ft.		12s. 9d.
9ft. by 9ft.		7s. 6d.	12ft. by 13½ft.		14s. 6d.
9ft. by 10½ft.		8s. 6d.	12ft. by 15ft.		15s. 9d.
9ft. by 12ft.		9s. 6d.	12ft. by 18ft.		19s. 6d.
10½ft. by 12ft.		11s. 6d.	12ft. by 21ft.		22s. 6d.

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., Aug. 3rd.—Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque enclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size, 2yd. long and 1yd. wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4/3 6 for 8/-, or 12 for 15/6. Sterling Value.

High School, Burnham, Maidenhead, Jan. 21st.

F. W. Baker, Esq., writes: "I have received the Carpet and Rug, and feel I must write to thank you for your excellent choice. I have shown them to several of my friends and they all think them remarkable value and very pretty. I trust soon to give you another order."

Provided *Short Stories* Coupon, 25/6/98, is quoted, a FREE GIFT will be enclosed—a very handsome Electro Silver Plated "OWL" PEPPER STAND with coloured eyes and gilt feet. Also our Bargain Book enclosed gratis. Cash returned if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON. 25/6/98.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied. (Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

We rely upon spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the Maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century. All orders despatched same day, in rotation, as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to—

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." National Telephone, No. 948. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates.

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